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L. MARCH PHILLIPPS



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BY

LISLE MARCH PHILLIPPS

AUTHOR OF "THE WORKS OF MAN"

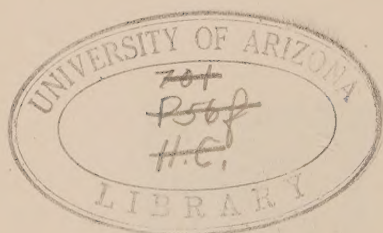


DUCKWORTH

3 HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

*First Published* - - 1915

*Second Impression* - 1925




**PRINTED IN  
GREAT BRITAIN**

## Dedication

I AM GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT NO ONE MAY PROPERLY JOIN IN THE DEDICATION OF A BOOK WHO HAS NOT ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE WRITING OF IT. MY WIFE HAS NOT HELPED TO WRITE THE PRESENT BOOK, SAVE IN SO FAR THAT HER PLUCK AND PATIENCE HAVE RENDERED ITS PRODUCTION POSSIBLE, BUT NONE THE LESS DOES SHE UNITE WITH ME IN DEDICATING IT GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY TO

HELEN AND LUDOVIC UNWIN





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## INTRODUCTION

KNOWLEDGE comes to us in two ways: it comes to us by way of an inward, immediate vision, or instinct, as we call it, which perceives the end without perceiving the steps by which it is attained; or it comes by way of the more matter-of-fact action of reason and of thought. In all ages the difference, even the rivalry and opposition between these two methods of perception, has been recognised. Mystics and rationalists distinguish between the emotional and intellectual standpoints, between the interior and the exterior vision, or, as is so often said, between "the things that are without and the things that are within." "Put away vain reason and the outward shows of things," cries the mystic, "and surrender yourself to the act of spiritual contemplation which has for its subject-matter the truths that endure." "Brush aside," cries the rationalist, "visions and dreams of an unknown state of being, and confine yourself to the aspects of this material universe, which is the only one of which you have, or are ever likely to have, experience." Thus the teachers of mankind, the mystic, the seer, the prophet, the ascetic on the one hand, and on the other the philosopher, the scholar, the man of science speak to the world. They have ever been so much opposed that the success of one side has been measured in the loss of the other, and for mystical progress it was as essential to surrender material interests and the faculties of the mind which take charge of those interests, as for proficiency in science and mundane knowledge it was necessary to abjure abstract spiritual contemplation.

This dualism has always, I say, existed in life, and since art is an expression of life, and is governed and controlled by life's emotions and ideas, we can but expect that so marked a distinction in life will reflect itself in a corresponding distinction in art. That expectation is verified. The true main elements in art are form and colour. Of these form, in its essence, is a process of definition which lends itself spontaneously to the operations of intellect, while colour, in its essence and divorced from form, is the natural medium in which sensuous and emotional, as distinct from rational, impulses express themselves. Thus the essential division of the human mind into intellectual and emotional is mirrored in art's similar division into form and colour.

In this way have these two vehicles been used in the past. Form has dominated art whenever and wherever the intellectual faculty was dominant in life ; colour has dominated art whenever and wherever the emotional faculty has dominated life. Thus, by the traces they have left in art, the two great currents of ideas which have illumined the mind and spirit of man may be traced in their ebb and flow and in their interaction upon each other.

Moreover, it appears that not only is the mind of man divided into intellectual and spiritual faculties, and not only is art divided into the corresponding elements of form and colour, but the actual universe itself has come to share in this arrangement and be subject to a similar division. Every spiritual impulse which has quickened the soul of man has come out of the East just as every practical invention or intellectual conception has come out of the West. Mysticism is as commonplace an affair in Eastern life as science is in Western. Form, therefore, is the art idiom of the West, colour the art idiom of the East.

It has been attempted in the following pages, not only to show how all the great colour schools, such as the Byzantine style of architecture, the splendour of Gothic interiors, the suffused richness of Venetian painting, have been

derived directly from Eastern sources of influence, and in the same way how all the triumphs of form are strictly of Western origin, but also that each element in art is an outward manifestation of its own order of ideas, and when it appears in art only does so because its own order of ideas has previously appeared in life.

I would, in short, map out the past to the reader's eye as dominated by the play of the spiritual and rational faculties. I would show him the mystical faculty of inward vision—impatient of outward claims, silencing intellectual interference, intent and absorbed in contemplation—out of its home in the East darting Westward its rays of emotion and colour ; and I would show him the intellectual faculty, reliant on the aspects of things and devoted to material definitions, invading the East, now and again, with its well-equipped forces of definite facts and forms. Only I would show him these things, not as philosophical vague arguments, but as made visible and strikingly apparent in terms of art. As on a war map red or blue flags, advancing and retreating, register the conquests or defeats of their respective armies, so the movements of art in the past, crystallising into form or dissolving into colour, register the rise and decline of the two great orders of ideas to which humanity owes its enlightenment.

The value of such a testimony lies in the sense of intelligibility it carries with it. The past history of mankind is vague and in some measure incomprehensible. The whence and whither of the human lot is doubtful. By what forces are we moved, and by what invisible currents of racial instinct are we hurried along ? Is there anywhere an order in this chaos ?

Wordsworth speaks of moments of serenity and insight occurring in the midst of all this perplexity ; he speaks of a " serene and blessed mood,"

In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened.



Nature and the contemplation of Nature are the sources for Wordsworth of this enlightenment. But art is such a source also. Art in its record preserves the sense of proportion and significance. Whims, fantasies, the experiments of a day leave no permanent artistic impression behind them. Only the master-impulses, the thoughts shared by whole races survive. These survive, stripped of all obscuring irrelevancies, in their naked power. So that looking back, under art's guidance, we see humanity, not blindly fluctuating to and fro, but moving under the banners of great ideas in motions related to each other and governed by a purpose.

We are all one family. We are something, not out of our own thought and experience, but out of the thought and experience of past generations. What, then, was that thought and experience? What did it amount to? What is the message which the past sends on to the present? It is recorded in art. The best of Greek thought is recorded in the columns and architraves of a Doric temple. We must find room for that. The best of Hindu thought is recorded in the apses and domes of a Byzantine interior. We must find room for that. Matthew Arnold used to say that the great thing was to possess the best ideas going; but it is perhaps even more important to possess the best ideas not going. Ideas that are in the air can be trusted to take care of themselves. It is the ideas we have got out of touch with, the ideas we can no longer handle because of the atrophy in ourselves of the faculty which deals with them—it is these we need to exert ourselves to recapture.

The usual biblical phrase for the curing of the sick is that they were "made whole." The sick man, that is to say, was thought of as incomplete, as only part of a man, whereas the healthy man was whole or complete. What is true of the body is usually more or less true of the mind. Mental sickness is apt to be a kind of lopsidedness due to the development of certain faculties at the expense of others. The sources from which joy

and insight are derived by one age may be perhaps sealed up entirely for another. The East, developing its spiritual mysticism with concentrated fervour, ignored with equal completeness the claims and gifts of the intellect. The West, cultivating under Greek auspices the fruits of intellect, had scarcely a thought to spare for spiritual insight.

But the main characteristic of modern life is the world-wide scope and breadth of its knowledge, its research, its appreciation. We cannot ever again concentrate exclusively on a life or an art entirely spiritual or entirely intellectual. The necessity is forced upon us, by our outlook, our point of view, our whole culture, of being "whole" in a new sense, whole, that is to say, not in the sense of being wholly devoted to the things of the soul or of the mind, but as including both these in our estimate of a whole man.

In this necessity of ours art is our best aid. Whatever is dropped out of account in to-day's estimate, art survives to correct our reckoning. This is the great advocate which testifies to all the sources from which the mind of man has derived light and pleads for the disinterested use of all the human faculties. Weighing its testimony we enter into the meaning of thoughts which have been the stay of ages; sides of our nature long disused are quickened; we shake ourselves free from the paralysing conventions and limitations of contemporary thought, and in the recognition of what is permanent we obtain release from that worst of all tyrannies, the tyranny of the ephemeral.

I have divided my subject into three parts; the first dealing with the East, the second with the classical epoch, and the third with Christian Europe, these being, as it seems to me, the most significant eras into which life and art can be divided. In each case a preliminary chapter deals with the point of view and outlook of the epoch afterwards to be described in terms of art. Thus the first part (after a chapter on Nature, which may seem

an irrelevance, but which is really not so) opens with a sketch of India's spiritual philosophy, and briefly indicates the extent to which that central thought has monopolised the attention of the Indian mind, to the entire exclusion of intellectual culture. This bias of the Indian mind imposes certain limitations on Indian life and civilisation, and indeed on the life and civilisation of the East as a whole, for the whole East has largely taken the ply from India, and in the following chapters this effect on the life and civilisation of the East is examined in its consequences upon art. That is to say, Eastern art is used as the interpreter of Eastern life.

In the same way with the classic section; the first chapter describes the exclusively intellectual bias of that period, the kind of life that was led, its successful developments and no less marked limitations, and the chapters which follow endeavour to point out how and in what manner both the noble qualities and the deficiencies of the Greek temperament are visibly incarnated in the characteristics of Greek art.

These two first parts, being naturally contrasted, are easy to deal with. The third is more difficult. I have endeavoured in the first chapter of this section to show that, from the Christianised age on, the attempt of the West constantly was to unite and combine the spiritual and intellectual motives which had hitherto been cultivated separately, and under conditions which seemed to show that they were deemed irreconcilable. It is during the mediaeval period that the reconciliation and equal development of these two ideals is first apparent. Mediaeval life is remarkable, on the one hand, for its strong, practical realisation of mundane interests and keen and virile interest in mundane affairs, and, on the other hand, for the speculative fervour with which it surrendered itself to spiritual contemplation, and its evident sensitiveness to that kind of inward felicity. From that date on, whatever fluctuations to one side or the other may have occurred, it has always been apparent that no ultimate



contentment was to be achieved which left out of account either of the two great preceding developments of the human intelligence. Christian art, during and since the mediaeval epoch, has been and is, I think, chiefly significant by reason of its unremitting experiments in the reconciliation of these hitherto opposed ideals.

Briefly, then, the aim of what I have written is to treat art as a language of which the two main dialects are form and colour, and in this way, by the examination of its really perfectly intelligible records, to add the testimony of art to such evidences of the characters and motives of man as we already possess. The reader who happens to be acquainted with a former book of mine, *The Works of Man*, may observe a resemblance between that and the present one. At the time the earlier book was written I had not fully grasped the range of the ideas with which I was dealing, and I was content to treat styles of art as merely characteristic of their own epochs and races. However, the earlier standpoint leads naturally to the later, so much so that the chapters of *The Works of Man* fall into their place, and may be read as amplifications of the present volume.

Some of the material, amounting to about four or five chapters, of the following pages has appeared in the *Contemporary* and *Edinburgh Reviews*. I am much obliged to the editors of those periodicals for allowing me to make the present use of it.

LISLE MARCH PHILLIPPS.

SATWELL, HENLEY-ON-THAMES.



## CHAPTER I

### THE TESTIMONY OF NATURE

Those scenes in Nature in which the quality of form most predominates tend to stimulate an intellectual mood ; those scenes in which colour predominates stimulate an emotional mood.

My object in this chapter is a simple one. I wish to point out that the arguments we shall by and by apply to art apply also to Nature, and are borne out and verified, so to speak, by the views and landscapes we see around us. Such testimony is important, because laws which are laws of art only, which have been evolved in the studio or formulated by critics but have no general application, are of very doubtful authenticity and value compared to those which can be shown to form part of the universal scheme of Nature. In the present book we are dealing with form and colour, elements common to Nature and to art, and we shall presently perhaps be able to show that, as regards art, form is the expressive vehicle for intellectual impressions and colour the expressive vehicle for emotional impressions. But there is nothing exclusively artistic or aesthetic in these propositions. They hold just as good of all natural sights and objects as they do of pictures and sculpture, and the reader can verify them as well in a country walk as in visits to museums. We shall find, if we consult Nature, that, in her operations, too, colour is emotional and form intellectual ; and more than that we shall find that, in ringing the changes on these motives, Nature relies on

just the same agencies as Art does. For instance, we shall find that scenes in Nature which most deeply strike the emotional chord in us are scenes in which colour is controlled by chiaroscuro rather than by shape and outline, whereas those scenes which are most evidently intellectual are scenes in which colour is controlled by shape and outline rather than by chiaroscuro. Step by step, as colour passes under the dominion of light and shade or under the dominion of individual objects, an emotional or intellectual value will be found to attach to it. That, we shall find, is the rule in Nature ; and by and by, when we discover that precisely the same rule holds good in art, we shall regard it with the more respect for having remarked that it was a law of Nature before it was a law of art.

Let us, then, with this testimony in view, essay a brief analysis of one or two samples of scenery. Along the south Devon coast the cliffs often descend abruptly into the sea, and as we round the promontories each bay reveals its cluster of cottages, its boats on the shingle, and old grey quay, the whole being secluded by the capes east and west which hold the hamlet in their embrace, and endow it with the distinction of isolation. If the reader will imagine himself to be looking at such a scene he will perceive that the definite character of its objects awaken a like mood of definite observation in himself. The cottages, the grove of masts in the harbour, the white gulls wheeling above them, the outspread nets on the beach, these and a hundred other items are distinct features with a meaning and associations belonging to them. They have much to communicate with regard to the life and character of the community. They are things to notice and think about, and their appearance naturally tends to awaken in the mind a correspondingly observant mood. In a word, the *forms* of cottage, boat, gull, and the rest of them stimulate that kind of reasoning comprehension which we call intellectual.

But if, as the boat drifts under the shadow of the



cliff, he leans over the side and gazes down into the depths of water till they absorb his vision, the reader will be aware immediately of a change of mind within himself, a change of mind corresponding to the change of view presented to his vision. The transition from exterior to interior, from looking at to looking into, will constitute a change not in outward point of view only, but in his own mood. In the transition one set of faculties, the faculties which recognise, distinguish, and reason upon the doings and appearances of Nature, are laid to rest, and another set of faculties, the faculties which apprehend the mystery of the universe and readily respond to spiritual promptings, are awakened and stimulated.

Further, he will perceive that, though the mood of pure feeling—of sensation as distinct from thought—in which he is now wrapt, resents the intrusion of definite forms, that is, definite ideas, yet it answers instantly to suggestions of colour. If clouds pass over the sun and the depths turn cold and grey, his own emotions contract to the same bleakness. If the rays shine out and those depths are illuminated with colour, his mood dilates in proportion, and he is aware of an intensified spiritual consciousness.

Here, then, are two scenes in immediate juxtaposition. In the one the quality of form predominates. A number of distinct, recognisable objects are set out in view, suggesting ideas, as definite as themselves. The whole scene exudes ideas, and naturally the mood of the on-looker responds to the stimulus, and his intellectual faculties of recognition and observation are kept active and alert. In the second scene, on the contrary, forms cease to exist, and with them dies mental activity. But the very absence of recognisable objects opens the way for a mood of enhanced spiritual sensibility, which, too, has its own machinery, and, as it passes from the intellectual to the emotional phase, is played upon not by notes of form but by notes of colour.

The distinction we have noted is a universal one. Form is always, in all circumstances of art or Nature, intellectual in its essence. It speaks directly to the understanding. Moreover, in consequence of its intellectual nature, it appeals most strongly to intellectual races and periods. It is strong whenever and wherever intellect is developed, and weak whenever and wherever intellect is undeveloped. If the sense for form has always prevailed in the West, it is because the West has particularly relied upon and cultivated the intellectual faculty. Further, in the West it has prevailed most and achieved its finest successes when the intellectual stimulus behind it was freshest and most vital, as in classic Greece and Renaissance Italy. On the other hand, colour, being emotional in its essence, has always appealed most strongly to emotional races. Thus the colour sense is indigenous to the East because the East has always relied upon the emotional faculty, the faculty of passive intuition as opposed to active thought. If the reader will recall the scenes just described, he will follow the transition as a matter of personal experience. While gazing at the boats, cottages, and trees of the coast he belonged to the West. His material was the material out of which Western science and creative art have wrought their triumphs, and which has given to our Western ideas their practical bias. But when he detached himself from that view to immerse his attention in the depths of ocean, he abandoned the Western standpoint for the Eastern. He became a seer, a fakir, a yogi. The spiritual consciousness which suffused his being is the only mode of apprehension which the East recognises ; and it was attained in the same way, by the renunciation of the things of sense. In turning his eyes from outward appearances to inward depths he is obeying the Eastern counsel which lies at the root of asceticism in all ages, and the enhanced spiritual consciousness which he feels stealing over him is a taste of the identical emotional ecstasy for the

sake of which so many austerities have been patiently sustained.

Let me bring these arguments to yet one further test. A beech-wood in autumn, at a time when the leaves have turned yellow but are still thick on the trees, may be cited as the most profoundly emotional and sensuous effect in English scenery. Near a certain house in Dorsetshire such a grove exists, formed of towering trees, the branches of which, meeting and mixing above, enclose the interior of the wood with vaults of leaves, while the space beneath is darkened and at the same time indescribably enriched by the tints of the foliage through which the light filters.

Of the emotional character of such a scene there can be no question, but the author was recently the witness of an incident which, though trifling, may, as a proof of the influence of such scenery, be worth describing. It happened that a child was disporting itself on the lawn adjoining the beech-grove already mentioned, plucking flowers, helping the gardener, chasing butterflies, and accompanying its manœuvres with a lively chatter as now one thing now another attracted its attention. Presently it entered the grove to join the present writer, but no sooner had it done so than a striking change was visible in its whole manner and bearing. Advancing into the interior of the wood, among the mottled shadows and beams of light, it paused and looked up and became as it were absorbed in, or rather by, its surroundings. In silence, with wide eyes and parted lips, it seemed to surrender itself to the current of feeling which possessed these glades, and when at last it turned to the writer it was with eyes dilated and with an expression as wrapt and abstracted as though it had seen a vision. Such an experience to be sure is no more than common, but, happening to be thinking of the nature of the feeling here present, to see its effect thus suddenly exerted on the unconsciously receptive temperament of a child startled the author almost as though he had for an instant

surprised the *genius loci* in visible aspect. A spirit seemed to inhabit these precincts, so immanent, so almost palpable to human sense, as to call to mind the famous sentence of Bright, "You can almost hear the beating of its wings."

In the depths of the wood as in the depths of the sea the spirit of emotion may equally reside. Nay, it may reside in much smaller compass. The effect of infinity it conveys is independent of actual extent. An object as tiny as a jewel will possess it, while a view embracing an area of miles will not possess it. It may be that the reason for the mystical and magical properties ascribed to gems and crystals, and the part they have always played in divination and the occult sciences, is due to the fact that they achieve, within their tiny circuit, perfect space obliteration. They possess the power of absorbing vision, and the world and its claims are forgotten by whoever gazes into them. In short, they are themselves facsimiles and small replicas of the emotional mood which is concerned, not with exact ideas, but with the consciousness of being. Their depths are depths of the soul, and whoever looks long into them feels the beginnings of hypnotic suggestion stirred by the presentment of an image of the infinite. Yet they may be carried in the fingers. These phenomena are, however, familiar to all. That the reader is aware of the mood we are concerned with may be taken for granted. Let us go on, then, to ask the further question—What is there in the disposition and arrangement of our autumn mood that can account for the kind of influence it exercises? What are the emotional factors that are at work in it?

In the first place it is very noticeable that the colour here present appears to be used almost independently of form. Forms actually convey it, of course, but it does not express their shape and dimensions. No forms are visible. The leaves under foot, bronze, brown, grey, are not leaves but rather the blended stitches of a carpet, as soft and dim as some old Persian mosque carpet. So,



too, the multitude of leaves of the roof have no individual existence, but, like the leaves of the carpet, are inextricably mingled together. Even in the intermediate spaces betwixt roof and floor, where the great columns of trunks stand by which the whole fabric is supported, no sharp delineations of form occur. The trunks in the deep shade suggest themselves but dimly, like shapes seen through deep water. Their colour is of the kind which melts readily into the surrounding shadows, and in the obscurity in which the lower depths of the wood are shrouded they seem content to efface themselves.

We allow ourselves sometimes to be taken in by mere statements of fact. Colour cannot exist, we say, apart from substance ; it must colour something. Neither can substance exist, at least visibly, apart from colour. The two, therefore, are inseparable, and to talk of either existing without the other is fallacious. But we have to do with things, not as they are, but as they appear to be, as the eye sees them, for it is thus that they affect the mind. And as a matter of appearance form and colour are separable and even adverse influences. They are taking part in a struggle all over the landscape, and are adversaries in every view we look at. Sometimes form predominates, that is to say, it gets colour into its power and forces it to articulate, forces it to say tree, or gate, or cow, or what not, and of course the mind of the observer is immediately impressed by all the ideas that trees and cows and gates stand for. Sometimes, on the contrary, forms are indistinctly rendered, and among the blending of many objects and the shuffled lights and shades the effect often produced is merely of a variety of tints. One may conceive, in short, of the visible universe as a film suspended before the eyes, of which the colours now have a tendency to adopt decisive outlines and definite shapes, and now again tend to run into each other and mingle in rich suffusions of their own. These are the two rival tendencies which stimulate intellectual or emotional consciousness, and it is in fact in this way that colour is

always used, not only in Nature but in art, the intellectual school using it to define form and the emotional school using it for its own sake.

If the reader would test this a little further, let him walk on a few steps to the verge of the beech-grove, where, through low gaps between trunks and under branches—gaps which may be called the doors and windows of the wood—he can obtain glimpses of the view without, of distant hillsides with fields chequered on them, and solid hedgerow elms, and the tiled roofs of a farm with clustering out-buildings. Here is a scene completely governed by form and the ideas which forms convey. But a moment ago we were steeped in an emotion voiceless but absorbing. Yet while emotion was thus stirred our mind was quiescent, for no clear shapes, or objects capable of rousing distinct ideas, were present to excite its attention. Those gorgeous yet grave tints, that coloured twilight in which we were immersed, as they delineated no recognisable forms, so they suggested no definite thoughts. And our own mood, emotional yet inarticulate, was of a like nature. We had no language for our feelings, for language is itself a kind of form, or act of definition stimulated by the presence of form, and here form was not. But now that our glance finds the outlets along the margin of the grove, and looks out upon the slopes of hill and objects depicted upon them, how swiftly does our mood change! The colour of the scene before us is now descriptive colour. It talks, it explains. It is the turn now of definite ideas to take the place of indefinite emotions. The square church tower, the just reaped stubble field with the team and plough already at work furrowing its gold to black, the line of new-thatched ricks along the hedge, the cattle drowsing in the shade, now swinging a tail, now flicking an ear, the glimpse of the manor-house half hidden in trees:—these and scores of other details the eye seizes with instant recognition. Each object is known for what it is, and arouses the ideas and associations proper to it. The mind awakens, and the spectator

becomes a different man. Unconscious an instant ago of the very existence of material things, he is now, with the recognition of those objects, church, cow, tree, and the rest of them, the creature of his own time and place once more. The English life, the gentle, implacable routine of its ideas and habits, its religious teaching, its social distinctions, its agricultural processes, is outspread before him. This it is, this life of practical ideas and definite duties, which now absorbs the onlooker and makes him, as he looks, part of itself. And this it does, not as the rich hues of the wood did, by setting up an interchange of emotional suggestions, but by setting up, through the instrumentality of form, an interchange of intellectual suggestions.

Throughout all Nature the same holds good. Everything that is has reasons for being what it is, and when it insists on what it is—that is, when it insists upon its quality of form—it forces those reasons upon our notice, and in so doing stimulates the intellectual mood in us. Form, in short, is colour intellectualised or given intellectual value and significance. In common speech we allude to the colour of flowers, birds, or animals as belonging to them, and as constituting, with other attributes, our fixed idea of them. Colour used in this sense is an adjective, and like all good adjectives its first duty is to its noun. It depicts for us all the ideas and associations which its noun evokes, but its own substantive value is undermined in the process of interpretation. How subject under such conditions colour is to form may easily be realised by transferring identically the same colour from a form which we like to one which we dislike. It will be found that in the act of transfer the colour itself undergoes a similar transformation, and that the very same colour which pleases us in a form that was pleasing offends us in a form which is repulsive to us. For the same reason colour, belonging to a pleasant object, but which gives an ill report of that object, always repels us. The colours which signify disease, corruption, death in

objects related to us are revolting. The colour of a jaundiced skin, an egg-stained tablecloth, and a daffodil may be identical, but they are far from having the same value. Standing one day before a butcher's shop I endeavoured to reason myself into an appreciation of its colour. The rich red of the flesh was close to some of the darkest of the red roses, or perhaps still more exactly tallied with the crimson of the common peony. The slabs of firm yellow fat were of the very colour and texture which Reynolds truly said that all great colourists' pictures were made of. But the best of the colours was the white of the lard. This, at once pure and warm, is perhaps the most perfect white in Nature, not excepting the white of ivory. Its beauty is due to the quality of its texture. It is the ideal *impasto* which all great masters have aimed at, smooth but not brittle, solid but not hard.

My efforts, however, were fruitless. Though I might reason myself into an acknowledgment of the quality of these colours, yet to feel pleasure in them was beyond me. Overmastering all emotional impulses stood the hard fact that these beautiful tints were defining and presenting for intellectual acceptance the spectacle of a heap of mangled fragments of animals' carcasses. The meaning of the colour, I had to admit, counted for more than its quality. It was an adjective and the property of its noun.

This is the bondage from which colour has to be set free before it can put forth its own emotional power ; and the only means by which it can be set free is by the toning down and partial obliteration of the quality of form. So long as forms are presented to the eye in salient relief their colour is bound to remain primarily descriptive, and accordingly the mitigation of that clearness of outline is an indispensable preliminary to the display of substantive colour. The rough test is whether or not an object strikes the attention by form or by colour. If the former—if the first glance is a glance of recognition—then the possibilities of colour are in subjection to the



intellectual control of form. If the latter—if colour asserts its influence direct on the feelings without the mind having a chance of raising the question of form—then colour is asserting its own inherent emotional power. In order that it may be able to do this, however, it is essential that the self-assertion of form and natural tendency to thrust itself forward should be checked and toned down.

Moreover, no sooner do we entertain the thought that emotional effects depend upon the mitigation of form and intellectual effects on its articulation than a score of phenomena occur to confirm the conclusion. The landscape that spreads round us, prosaic and matter-of-fact in the light of common day, becomes steeped in sentiment and feeling as soon as the shades of evening, or the mist rising along the valley, obscure its details. We have all, looking out at a moonlit garden, been arrested by a shock of surprise at the transformed scene, and felt how keenly in that altered guise it appealed to the emotional sense in us. These are among our common experiences, but what do they mean? Why does Arnold, when he wants us to feel the sentiment and romance of Oxford, speak of her as “spreading her gardens in the moonlight”? Why does Scott insist that, if we would lay ourselves open to the emotional suggestions of Melrose Abbey, we must “visit it by the pale moonlight”? Why is the moon so identified with sentiment and romance and with the rhapsodies of poets and lovers? Why do ghosts walk by night, and witches and goblins restrict their activity to the hours of darkness? Why is night the season of all vague terrors and alarms? In a word, why does obscurity let loose our fancies and so act upon the emotional side of our nature that it becomes sensible to the least suggestions?

Not because of any positive additions which obscurity introduces into the scene evidently, for it introduces none such, but because it quiets and lays to rest our rational and intellectual faculties and so leaves our emotional nature free to act. And how does it lay to rest our rational

and intellectual faculties? By blotting out or veiling those definite appearances which it is the business of the intellectual faculties to attend to, and the presence of which keeps those faculties on the alert; in other words, by veiling the quality of form in things.

The reader will think of many other instances of the same kind. It will occur to him that a chief reason for the sentimental attraction of old buildings and ruins, quite apart from the time of day or night we may choose to visit them, consists in the obliteration in them of distinctness of form, in consequence of which the ideas they suggest are not of the exact and definite kind which speak to the intellect, but of the vague and visionary order which touch the emotions. So, too, he will feel that the sentiment which, as has often and rightly been said, belongs to English landscapes in contrast to southern—in contrast, say, to the landscapes of Greece or Egypt—is owing largely to the softening and blurring influence of the English climate, which effectually subdues in our scenery that quality of form which in Greece and Egypt retains its exactitude to the farthest limits of the horizon. There are many natural conditions at work which make in this way for sentiment, of which distance with all its deceptive effects, mists, twilight, shadows, etc., are among the chief. Under such influence the most uncompromising forms often take to themselves an emotional quality; but these agents always work on the same principle, and we find invariably that the forms which under their handling become susceptible of emotional suggestions have been divested of their formal exactitude. There are emotional suggestions in winter woods, but they are most felt in the dim days when the structure of the trees is half hidden. There are emotional suggestions in London streets, but they, too, assert themselves at similar times, as on early winter evenings when the feeble daylight is dying out and the first lamps struggle fitfully through the damp vapour, half mist, half smoke, which hangs about the parks and lends its aid to approaching darkness in

obscuring the clear outlines and sharp angles of the house-fronts and street-corners.

From such general considerations it seems that Nature, when she would open a way for the play of the emotions, begins by subduing and suppressing the intellectual appeal of form. This is the preliminary process, the foundation, as it were, of emotional effects. But at the same time this does not of itself guarantee depth and richness to such effects. We need for this not a merely negative but a positive agent. And such a one exists. For now we find that the emotional mood has a tremendous ally of its own which it can bring into action. This ally is colour, which, with the veiling of form, assumes a rôle of hitherto unimagined importance. The quality of the emotional suggestions to be conveyed become now its care. All scenes are endowed with colour of a sort, but since the conditions which obscure form (such as darkness, distance, etc.) as a rule obscure colour too, the colour effect of such scenes is usually low in tone, as on damp, misty days, or almost negative as at night. The emotional effect of this low-toned colour is of a like quality to itself, that is to say, it reaches for the most part only to a melancholy or pensive mood. Such feelings are perhaps almost too colourless to pass as emotions. The word "sentiment" best describes them. The sentiment of winter woods, the sentiment of twilights and murky London streets, such seems the proper definition of these scenes. But when, on the rare occasions when this is possible, to dimness of form is added richness of colour, then there is produced an emotional effect of corresponding power and intensity, an emotional effect which is able to steep the whole spirit in ecstasy and lift it to the highest point attainable, perhaps, by man in the sphere of pure sensation.

Accordingly, how to release colour from the grasp of form while preserving its full intensity becomes the problem which every great emotional manifestation is confronted with. Darkness and distance, mist and

vapour, all have the power of obscuring form, but they all in doing so obscure colour also. Is there no agent that will do what we wish, that will release colour for us without injuring it?

There is only one such. Chiaroscuro, as we rather clumsily call the play of light and shade, is a more powerful agent than form. Its operations are on a larger scale and overrule the personal differences by which forms are divided. At the same time, so far from obscuring colour, it develops all its resources by revealing all its gradations. In the beech-wood scene we were just now speaking of, the power of chiaroscuro is signally exhibited. The whole interior of the grove is under the dominion of an extraordinarily powerful scheme of light and shade, of which a substratum of deep shadow forms the basis, while the upper portion is suffused with light. The division, however, between the two is not abrupt. Each in varying gradations invades the province of the other; the light often penetrating down into the shade, the shadows often, where the foliage is thickest, ascending into the regions of light. Thus intermingling and combining, the two map out the whole view, which, seen through half-closed eyes, has the appearance of being articulated entirely in terms of light and shade. Forms appear to be non-existent, and every portion of the scene and all its features, the roof, the floor, trunks, branches, leaves, are melted down by chiaroscuro into the elements of its own huge design.

Let me take the reader one step farther. We have been dealing so far with English scenery, but it must be remembered that in English scenery the emotional element is, as a rule, only partly developed. Nature, as we know her in Europe, the nature of a temperate or cold climate, shows a constant bias towards form. The comparatively sparse and scanty vegetation, the tough, hard-wooded, slow-growing trees, the fall of the leaf in winter, which reveals in all its clearness the structure of trees and plants for a large part of the year—these are considera-



tions which all tend to emphasise the idea of form and keep it prominent ; so that although Western scenery is rich enough in that kind of mild sentiment which we associate with dimness, with a thick atmosphere, with winter days and long twilights, and although, now and again, it breaks out into such rich effects as we find in the autumnal woods, yet these last more forcible expressions of emotion are after all exceptional and rare moods. The main factor in it is form. The qualities that seem inherent in it, virility and precision, strength and endurance, are essentially the qualities belonging to form.

We must go to the East for examples, at its greatest, or at least at its most complete, of the emotional influence in Nature. Every one, even those who have never visited the tropics, carries in his mind an impression of the character of tropical scenery, and of that impression splendour of colouring constitutes the basis. The very word "tropical" suggests not only colouring more gorgeous but also more sensuous than anything known to our grey landscapes. It denotes the intensity of emotion which goes with a certain kind of colouring. Tropical blossoms, waxen-petalled, heavy-perfumed, have something of that character at once violent and languid which belongs to the impulses of passion.

With these ideas of tropical scenery in his mind it may surprise the reader to learn that in actual brilliance and vividness of colour tropical vegetation often does not surpass or even approach English vegetation. At some seasons of the year English scenery is far more brilliant in colouring than tropical scenery ever is. There is a great deal more vividness of tint in an English spring wood paved with bluebells, or in golden buttercup fields framed in hawthorn hedges, or in English shrubberies with their wealth of lilacs and laburnums, or in many views along, for example, that Devon coast we were lately speaking of, where dark red cliffs meet a dark blue sea while all the slopes above are encrusted with the rich yellow of gorse in

full bloom, than are ever to be met with in a tropical jungle.

To what, then, is the more powerfully sensuous effect of tropical colouring due? It is due to the fact that, while Western colouring is controlled and dominated by form, Eastern colouring is controlled by light and shade. The growth of Western woods is usually distinct. The trees preserve their shape and individuality; ample light is admitted between them. Even in summer time there are usually sufficient indications of trunks and knotty, angular branches to preserve the sense of structure. But the flexible, climbing creepers and lianas of a tropical forest are tangled together and involved in a dense canopy in which all sense of individual form is swallowed up and lost. There recur to the writer memories of days passed in the jungles of the Ceylon low-country, and these memories are all similar: memories of mysterious twilights full of dim and sinuous lines, rising slantingly or hanging in loops, thickening the matted roof among the tree-tops, but not distinct themselves and fulfilling no distinct structural purpose. Nourished by a rank soil and stimulated by a blazing sun, vegetation in the tropics shoots up with a rapidity, a zest, almost a fury, of which in colder climates it exhibits no trace. From the moment of leaving the earth the struggle is for the light, and plants and parasites start off upon an upward race of which the goal is the roof overhead and the light which shines upon it. It is curious to observe how all plants are equipped with speed to aid them in this race. Canes and bamboos, hollow-stalked and long-jointed, of which the growth is almost visible to the eye, abound; but still more common are the various creepers which ascend the trunks of trees with snake-like rapidity until they feel the sunlight above, when they spread themselves out in waves of foliage or blossom, sometimes hanging down in pendulous wreaths or festoons, at others enveloping and blotting out the tops of trees in their close embrace; using their long stems, let down through

the gloom, as hoses through which to suck moisture from the soil, while their real life is lived in the leafy roof far overhead under the constant hot beams of the sun.

Inevitably the result of such a struggle as this is the formation of a dense canopy spread over the jungle, composed of myriads of twisting and twining tendrils, and wrought into so thick a covert that even the rays of a tropical sun can rarely penetrate it; so that, as Humboldt has pointed out of the Brazil forests—and the same holds good of all tropical forests—"there reigns continually a kind of dim daylight, a peculiar sort of obscurity, of which our forests of pines, oaks, and beech trees convey no idea." This peculiar obscurity is, in fact, the chief and most inalienable characteristic of tropical scenery. Traversed by occasional floods of misty light, which break through the chinks in the roof or the larger gaps left by fallen trees, and die out by degrees in the murky depths of the forest, it constitutes a scheme of chiaroscuro of unrivalled richness and power, embedded in which some few occasional gleams of purple or red from high-hanging bunches of orchids or drooping tendrils of creeper stain the gloom, almost like the beams of coloured light that shine through the dusky windows of Chartres.

In their own line of the purely emotional and sensuous these colour-effects are the most potent probably that exist in Nature. But still, when we come to look into the character of the colouring, we find that its influence is due, not to its amount or brilliance, but to the fact that it is governed and disposed by means of chiaroscuro instead of by form. We are again brought to our previous conclusion when we were contrasting the various aspects of English scenery. Insist upon form, develop form, place form in command of the composition, and instantly colour becomes a property of form, a subordinate, and its depth, richness, power, its emotional value in a word, die out of it. Release, with the help of chiaroscuro, colour from form; let it be uncircumscribed, let it

smoulder and glow in the gloom and shadows, and its emotional value returns to it.<sup>1</sup>

Scenes of the true tropical character must needs be almost unknown in a country like England, but I have met with one or two, one of which I once attempted to describe in an article in the *Manchester Guardian*, which I now have before me. This was a huge, shaggy, unkempt wood in Devonshire called Allen's Down, the peculiarity of which among woods was that it had been left entirely neglected and uncared for for many years, so that the timber had sprung up and decayed and fallen as it listed or best could, forming a vast jungle of trees in all stages of growth, decrepitude, and decay. Fifty years ago this forest was already old, and since then, down to the time I wrote of it, not a tree had been touched. Thousands of pounds' worth of timber had fallen, and the limbs and trunks lay strewn about, until, by gradual decomposition, they had mingled once more with the soft, damp soil. "Growth and decay have gone hand in hand," I wrote, "and through the rotting vegetable matter of old trunks young saplings and brambles push up. I wandered on through this strange scene of constant ruin and renewal. The covert above was too dense, the air below too dim, to encourage much undergrowth. . . . My feet made no sound in the soft earth carpeted with pine needles. Dimness, silence, and a melancholy mystery reigned, except that here and there where trees had fallen and

<sup>1</sup> Some years ago I wrote a few lines in a newspaper describing a sale of orchids which had taken place in London, with the thought in my mind of the difference between the orchid as seen in common London daylight and in its native jungle. After pointing out the impossibility of separating the flower from its surroundings without the loss to it of nine-tenths of its beauty, I went on to say: "The dark shade of interlocked boughs and twisting, knotted creepers seems cast on purpose to show off its rare splash of intense colour. All the sentiment, the passion, contained in the word 'tropical' is summed up in it. But sever it from these surroundings, transpose it to London, and what have you got? Not the orchid, but a rarity, a curiosity, a freak. For one of these freaks somebody yesterday paid £1200 at the Cheapside sale-rooms. But it was an *Odontoglossum crispum* Pittianum he bought, not an orchid" (*Tribune*, March 23, 1906).



left a gap, the sunlight burst in, making fiery spots in the gloom, striking left and right on the gaunt fir-trunks, and setting the scanty autumn foliage of the beeches in a blaze. It was curious to notice how promptly these fallen trees were set upon, and with what a horrible avidity they were devoured by all kinds of lesser vegetables—moss, ivy, honeysuckle, ferns, and other weeds and creepers—into whose hands their fall had delivered them. . . .

“ I had climbed down through one of the many damp and boggy ravines, putting up on the way a woodcock, the only bird I had seen perhaps for an hour, and was standing on the opposite rise looking back through the timber, when I became clearly conscious of that feeling of similarity in my surroundings which attends the rousing of old associations. I stared about. The autumn tints lit up the wood, and though it was November the sun’s heat could still be felt. Winter comes slowly up these Devonshire valleys. Three huge oaks grew near, their roots and trunks covered with a shaggy fleece of moss, their lower branches thickly sprinkled with polypody ferns. Beyond them the stems of tall firs thronged ; but few grew straight. Many slanted to this side or that. Some had fallen, and others would have fallen if they could, but were caught and prevented by their comrades, and so rotted half-standing, the bark dripping off and white fungus starting from the spongy wood. Ivy had seized many and enveloped them, and was consuming them in the very arms of their fellows. Young trees in their full vigour and prime were mixed with ancient and decaying stumps. Long wreaths of honeysuckle trailed from branch to branch, and, below, patches of sodden bracken, brown and yellow and white, made splashes of rich or livid colour where the light filtered through the tree-tops. The very smell, a smell of rank verdure and decomposing vegetable matter, struck me as familiar. I felt a twenty-year-old memory stretching and turning in its sleep. Then a jay in some tall beeches behind



me screeched like a parrot, and I remembered—I was standing in a Ceylon jungle among all the sights and sentiments and feelings of tropical life and tropical decay.”

When I wrote this description I had certainly no thought of any theory of colour. I was dwelling simply on the features of this Devonshire wood which had roused tropical associations and feelings in my mind. But the reader will notice that these features are for the most part connected with the dimness of the place and the blotting out of the sense of form, not with any prevailing rich or gorgeous tints. Some gleams and splashes of colour are mentioned, but the prevailing influence is made to depend on the dim light, and the mystery of obscurity, in which the forms of trees, mouldering and decomposing and half enveloped in ivy and honeysuckle, are but faintly seen and which is only broken by shafts of sunlight here and there. What was tropical here was not so much the colour as the manner in which the colour was presented. It was the blotting out of the intellectual suggestions of exact form and the prevalence of a rich scheme of chiaroscuro which gave the place its emotional power and stirred the associations which a tropical jungle stirs.

What we have here noticed in regard to Nature will be found to apply generally to life and art. Whenever colour develops its sensuous power and significance it will be found that exact articulation of form has been so softened and toned down that, relieved from that bondage, colour melts into a scheme of its own, making up in emotional depth for what it has lost in intellectual interest. Further, the instrument employed in the attainment of this end will also in each case be the same, namely, chiaroscuro, or the alternation of light and shade, the only means possible, I believe, of releasing colour without weakening it, because the only means by which a scheme of composition broader and more powerful than any at the command of form can be attained. Hence it follows

that the infallible test of a great colourist, a colourist of the emotional order, will be his masterly use of light and shade, and his tendency to rely on light and shade for the articulation of his design.

We shall deal more at large with examples presently ; let me content myself here with asking what is the difference between colour as used by intellectual Florence and as used by sensuous Venice ? Broadly speaking, it is that Florence controls and arranges colour by means of form, while Venice controls and arranges it by means of chiaroscuro. The point of view of the former is that which we just now adopted when we stood at the verge of the wood and saw a landscape arranged in separate particles, each distinct atom suggesting the ideas and intellectual interest proper to its own character and use ; the point of view of the latter is that to which we reverted when turning back into the wood we exchanged the vision of distant objects for the gorgeous yet stern tints which darkened and shone in its interior spaces.

## PART I

### CHAPTER II

#### THE EASTERN POINT OF VIEW

Eastern thought is purely emotional. It denies the very existence of a material universe and insists that the sole means of enlightenment resides in the cultivation of spiritual consciousness.

ART being an expression of life should be approached through life. Grasp the meaning of the motives which govern life and you have, by the same act, obtained the clue to the art which that life evolved. This is the order we will follow. We will first endeavour to obtain an insight into the point of view of the East, together with the possibilities and limitations which it involves, and we will then go on to consider how these characteristics are embodied in Eastern art.

The source of Orientalism, of the Oriental influence, is India. In the Hindu philosophy is to be found the thought with which the life of the East is dyed. Further, if we keep to essentials, we shall find that the general character of Hinduism is a perfectly easy matter to understand.

The Âtman in Hindu thought is the individual soul, which has, in outward appearance, become separated and cut off from Brahman, the universal soul. Yet this separation is, in fact, only the arch-illusion wrought by matter and the visible appearances of the universe, amid the unrealities of which the Âtman is ensnared and netted, and through the wearying vicissitudes of which it

passes in a long succession of reincarnations, tossed from body to body like a shuttlecock and perpetually subject to the deception of the senses, until the time comes when at last the soul, looking deep into itself, realises that the appearances of things are a hallucination, that spiritual being is the only real being, and that it is itself a part of and one with that being. The man who has reached this knowledge, who can say, "I am Brahman," has attained the goal. Henceforth materialism passes him by. He has stepped into the fulness of spiritual consciousness. Spiritual light envelops him, and in the brilliance of that light all earthly matter shrivels up and vanishes. His own soul has, as it were, obliterated all but itself.

This is the thought that is in the centre of the Hindu mind. Human nature craves the help of something outside itself, the help of a being superior to the limitations of mortality by which we are bound, the help of a God. But here Hinduism cannot help it. The notion of a God, the notion of any separate influence or being, of any source of light other than the soul, is alien to Hindu philosophy. To all the wailings of man the Hindu has the same answer: You crave light, you crave infinitude, you crave deliverance from mortal darkness and decay; look within, all you crave is within your own soul. You yourself are all that you long for. There is no light, no eternity, outside, or other than, you. To what do you hold out your hands and whose help do you invoke? Concentrate yourself in your soul. You are already the immortal and the infinite which you seek.

It is a hard saying, and human nature often finds it so. Human nature still craves extraneous succour and support, and Hinduism, in answer to that demand, has, however unwillingly, to provide extraneous succour and support of some sort; has to provide, that is, what does not really belong to it. Thus the application of the Hindu system to human life, human life being what it is, implies the falsification of it. All the unnumbered thousands of Indian sects fence with the same problem—

how to distil out of an abstract thought the aid which will satisfy human nature. The answers to the problem are many. In countless ways the ideas of a God, of worship, of religious ceremonial, have been wrung out of the abstract thought of Hinduism, and always the effect on that thought itself has been to degrade it more and more from its primary philosophical significance. Yet somehow the original thought does not perish. The Oriental is by nature emotional and contemplative. He is inclined to look into his own soul. He knows what it is to be suffused with spiritual consciousness ; and at those moments he forgets the superadditions of creeds and goes back to the central idea of his philosophy. Reformations in Hinduism are always returns upon the old thought. So that, through all variations a kind of unity belongs to Hinduism itself. Its most opposite practices, from extreme asceticism to sanctified lust, are fed out of the emotional idea of attainment through the absorption of self.

We misconceive Hinduism, therefore, if we think of it as a religion. The highest good open to the Hindu is the realisation of what *is*. Salvation, redemption, everlasting bliss consist in being able to say, " I am Brahman." There is here no room for adoration or worship or prayer ; for there is no God, or state of being apart from the spiritual essence which is ourselves. There is nothing to adore, or worship, or pray to. All the energy which others throw into worship and prayer the consistent Hindu pours into the intense act of introspection which reveals to him his own spiritual nature. This is the only infinity, the only divinity. This is the seat and source of all light, all truth, all wisdom, all bliss. With all the fervour with which religious people struggle to *save* their souls the Hindu struggles to *know* his soul.

All Hindu thought, I say, centres and plays around this conception of the spiritual consciousness or soul of man as his only guide and inspiration. The soul is the faculty on which the East depends for illumination, the faculty which has always stood in place of intellect.



Of this the whole civilisation and life of the East are the outcome. The whole civilisation and life of the East flow from this habit the East has always had of looking exclusively to the soul for guidance and not at all to the intellect.

This, then, being the East's chief thought, the thought most formative of Eastern life, let us probe for a moment into its history. Certain portions of the Vedas, the Hindu sacred writings, go back, it is conjectured, almost to the time of the original Aryan invasions. The religion of the invaders seems to have been much what one would have expected, and bears indeed a strong family likeness to the Nature-worship of the Gothic invaders of the West. The forces and phenomena of Nature are turned into deities, beneficent or malignant according to their influence on human affairs. The dark clouds of the anxiously expected rainy season, the "cows of the sky" that carry in their udders the moisture which is to revivify the earth, when they fail to bestow it are said to be shepherded by malignant demons who drive them off to the caves of the mountains. Indra is the friendly deity who, under these untoward circumstances, comes to man's assistance and pierces the vapour with his fiery thunderbolt, bringing down the longed-for deluge. Indra is a Norse god all over—haughty and fierce, rejoicing in battle; *bon camarade* withal, and a great lover of the intoxicating soma juice. He rushes, "impetuous as a bull," to the place where it is flowing, and he quaffs it "like a thirsty stag." Agni, the fire-god, is another typical Norse character, the qualities of the element he personifies being turned into personal traits with all the Norse humour. He is born of two pieces of stick, and incontinently devours his own parents. He condescends to live in the humblest dwellings, he dispels darkness and demons, and loves to be "fed abundantly with butter." In all things he lies ambushed, and can leap out suddenly from a stone when it is struck or from a black cloud. The Sun, the Dawn, the Storm Winds, the Earth, the

Waters are in the same way deities who command love and hymns of praise, or dread and acts of propitiation.

There is a quality about the robust Aryan gods all the world over which draws them together, and it is with feelings of quite friendly recognition that we, of Thor- and Odin-worshipping stock, survey the exploits and idiosyncrasies of the early gods of India. Soon, however, this sense of familiarity wanes, and a theory or idea begins to be developed in the East of apprehension by pure intuition, or inward **instead of outward** contemplation, which comes more and **more to engross** the Eastern mind, and in its development draws off the East along a path of progress of its own. To the Vedas were added by degrees the Upanishads. The word Upanishad is explained by Indian writers as signifying "secret." They convey, these books, a secret meaning intelligible only to a few ; and again and again the warning is reiterated not to speak openly of this profound secret, and to impart it only to such as have proved by perseverance their sincerity in the quest of it. To such, the elect, who are not to be turned aside from the pursuit of wisdom, and who, as it is often expressed, have so overcome self as to have "attained tranquillity," the secret may be whispered, but to none else.

This mysterious secret was the thought of which we have been already speaking, the thought destined to dominate Eastern life, that the soul or spiritual consciousness is the only source of real knowledge. Whispered as it first was in a society much used to the dominion of a powerful priestly caste and strictly held to the observance of an elaborate and, to the vulgar, incomprehensible ritual, the doctrine that a man's soul was the only teacher needed to be spoken under the breath. Professor Paul Deussen in his *Philosophy of the Upanishads* has some interesting remarks on the spread of the mystical doctrine. The jungles and vast forests of Northern India apparently harboured from remote ages a class of hermits and recluses, seekers after truth, who in solitary con-

templation awaited the instillings of the divine wisdom. Out of this hermit-life there originated certain writings or books known as Âranyaka or "forest-books," from Âranye, "in the jungle." They form, Professor Deussen says, "a natural transition to the speculations of the Upanishads," and accordingly we find philosophers and hermits recognising a mutual bond or similar cast of mind and joining forces, as a result of which the Upanishad teachings were attached to or incorporated with the forest books of the hermits. Such a union must appear natural, for it was a union of the contemplative philosophy with the contemplative life. Ultimately the new teaching was appropriated by the priestly cast and subjected to interpretations which, while falsifying it largely as an idea, admitted of its incorporation into ritualistic tradition. But in its rise we may think of this thought of India's innermost heart as a secret whispered in the depths of jungles by earnest and devoted students. The disciples of the new knowledge recognised one another by simple words or formulas only intelligible to the initiated, and, following on such recognition, there came, as Professor Deussen conjectures, secret meetings and consultations out of which were developed gradually the earliest books which bore the name of Upanishad. It must be understood that these conclusions are all to a certain extent conjectural; nothing would give a falsier impression of the state of our knowledge of Indian philosophy than an attempt to define the stages of its growth. But we know enough about it to be sure, at any rate, that it was developed, not out of cities and crowds of men and schools of thought and argument and intellectual research, but that it arose in the hearts of lonely watchers and thinkers who had abandoned the haunts of men to bury themselves in forest solitudes. Not publicity and controversy, but secrecy and solitary contemplation are the influences that watch over the infancy of Indian thought.

In this way, thus secretly, was unfolded the idea which was to dominate Eastern life. Of the dates of the

various Upanishads, mingled and intermixed as they are, it is impossible to speak with certainty, but it appears to be admitted that the speeches of Yâjñavalkhya in the Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad are among the oldest, and in these the great secret is already fully enunciated. Yâjñavalkhya compares the Âtman, the soul within the individual, to the ocean into which all currents are received. "As breathing he (the Âtman) is named health, as speaking speech, as seeing eye, as hearing ear, as understanding mind ; all these are but names for his operations." Elsewhere this idea of the soul as the sum of all consciousness is expanded. "When the eye is directed on space, he (the Âtman) is the spirit in the eye, the eye serves only for seeing ; and if a man desires to smell, it is the Âtman, the nose serves only for smelling ; and if a man desires to speak, it is the Âtman, the voice serves only for speaking ; and if a man desires to hear, it is the Âtman, the ear serves only for hearing ; and if a man desires to understand, it is the Âtman, the mind is his divine eye."

With awe and wonder the Eastern sages divined in their own souls the source of all wisdom. The soul is thought of as the "essential knowledge which shines within in the heart." It cannot itself be known ; its nature is not subject to any analysis that can be brought to bear upon it ; for the source of perception can never itself be perceived. "Thou canst not see the seer of seeing, thou canst not hear the hearer of hearing, thou canst not comprehend the comprehender of comprehension, thou canst not know the knower of knowledge." But just as the eye which cannot see itself is that which sees all that is seen, so the soul, itself incomprehensible, is that which comprehends all that is comprehended. Again and again it is reiterated by Yâjñavalkhya that the act of introspection, the reading in the soul, is the only real mode of perception. "The knower," "the knowing subject" are the commonest ways of describing the soul. Seeing is the strongest of our senses, and



besides its title of Knower the Âtman's perception is often likened to sight. It is the "seer" (*viparcit*), the "all-beholder" (*parid rashtar*), the "Spectator" (*Sakshin*). The Hindu conceived the soul as a great eye in the centre of his being, which was able, if he directed towards it his consent and attention, to raise its lid and gaze out on realities and eternities.

To an emotional people spiritual consciousness is far more than reason. Yâjñavalkya uttered a thought which was already sleeping in the hearts of millions. Once spoken it made its own way, soaking slowly through the Oriental mind. None have grasped its significance without feeling its power. It is customary for religions to depend more or less on externals, on historical evidence, on the testimony of miracles, on the continuity of tradition, on a recognisable, visible authority. But the appeal of Hinduism is to nothing but spiritual consciousness, to the Soul or Knower. All that is offered for acceptance is evolved out of the soul and is verifiable by the soul. In that way only is it verifiable. Reason and argument cannot handle it, for these are incapable of apprehending the spiritual. Do you ask a Hindu for proof that his thought is true? "Look into your own soul," he will answer, "and read the proof written there."

Thus, on the one hand, if Indian thought is perpetually being drawn, in response to man's need for religious sustenance, into definitions which its own rejection of the finite condemn beforehand as irrelevant, on the other it is perpetually engaged in clearing away these external superadditions and reducing man to the bare spiritual faculty. The latter attitude, the attitude of one spiritually conscious in a world of illusion, is, however, the genuine and characteristic attitude of Hinduism. Matter in Hindu thought has no existence. This apple is red. How do you know? Because my sight tells me so. But your sight is a property of your own, not of the apple's. It is sweet. How do you know? Because my taste tells me so. But your taste is a property of your own,



not of the apple's. And so all along the line. The attributes we assign to all objects, in virtue of which we assume their existence, are sensations of our own, and the supposition that these sensations are occasioned by external realities is a purely arbitrary one. For some reason or other we project our own sense-impressions of sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch into qualities of things separate from us. Who first conceived the ingenious idea of calling his own interior sensations of sweetness, hardness, redness, and the like by the name "apple" is not recorded. He may be figured in any case as the Hindu Adam. For in Hindu thought ignorance takes the place of sin, and man's Fall consisted not in disobediently eating an apple, but in foolishly imagining that there was an apple there to eat.

To this denial of the existence of matter (*prakriti*) the East recurs again and again, but with not so much of intellectual subtlety of analysis as of spiritual consciousness. The effect which that denial had on Indian spiritual thought was a signal proof of the power of materialism. It turned Hinduism into a dumb philosophy. The assurance we have of the reality of spiritual consciousness lies in nothing we can say of it, but in the quality of that consciousness itself. All explanation of it must needs be illusory; for by the very word "explain" we mean make clear to the mind; but the mind being itself, in Hindu thought, illusion, in so far as the mind can take hold of the soul, the soul itself must be illusion. Putting it another way, to the extent to which you can define the infinite in terms of the finite, to that extent the infinite ceases to be the infinite and becomes the finite.

There is therefore no idea of any kind that can be associated with the soul. The profoundest philosopher knows and can say nothing of it. For if he could say anything of it the fact of his saying it would be proof of its falsehood. Ideas, words, images, all that can be thought or uttered or in any way defined, are an outgrowth of the human condition and commensurate with it. They cannot grasp the spiritual order. Thus there is a cele-

brated formula repeatedly recurring in the Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad, "*Neti! neti!* It is not so, it is not so": the reply made to every attempted definition of the Âtman. Thus, too, Bahoa, repeatedly requested by the King Vashkalin to explain the Âtman, maintained a profound silence; but on the King's again and again reiterating his request, he answered: "I tell it you, but you do not understand; *canto'yam Âtma*, the Âtman is silence."

The Âtman is silence. Whatever you say of it, it is not so. Of the spiritual essence which alone is, which we are and which is us, nothing in this world of shadows can be spoken but what is false. Infinity, unity, eternity are words which swallow up and efface all human ideas. We cannot conceive a pure state of being. Our spiritual ideas are but the pale images of our mortal ones. We think we have a notion of the meaning of such words as infinite or eternal, but we are mistaken. Such words in our mouths not only have no meaning of their own at all, but the meaning we put into them is, in fact, the very reverse of that which we wish them to imply. For what we want to imply by eternal is the opposite of temporal, and what we want to imply by infinite is the reverse of finite. Yet so unsuccessful are we that we cannot get eternal to mean more than a prolongation of the temporal, or infinite more than a continuation of the finite. So true is it that whatever we would say of spiritual ideas, *Neti*, it is not so; the Âtman is silence.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time such a philosophy as this has no relation to life as we know it, and cannot be forced into any such relation. Every step Hinduism has taken to meet life has been a stultification of itself as an idea. Hence the more religion in India is turned to account the

<sup>1</sup> Thus, in most people's estimation, eternity is expressed by a great deal of time, and a million years are nearer to it than a second. But in reality, since eternity implies the total obliteration of time, a second is much nearer to it than a million years. Could you in fact snuff out that second as it passes, you would have destroyed time and entered upon eternity. Yet so wedded are we to our temporal standards that we go on in the old way, making immense accumulations of time convey our conception of no time at all.

more degrading an influence it becomes. India is the land of spiritual prostitution because she is the home of an entirely abstract order of spiritual conceptions.

Only this we may say, that however ineffective it may seem in practical ways, or to whatever base uses it may have been put, the thought of the existence of a spiritual faculty—that secret breathed through India's forests so many ages ago—has ever since been the essence of the spiritual faith of the world. It seems fated never to die, this thought, and we ourselves shall meet with it by and by mingling with and changing the purposes and ideals of Western life. But in the West its action is intermittent. There are many, perhaps a vast majority of Western folk, who are quite incapable of conceiving what is meant by the soul as an actively knowing agent, for their own souls do not act in this way. Yet on this thought the East lives. Just as a pool of water, when all impurities and disturbances have settled and ceased and its surface has become calm and still, reflects with the utmost perfection the surrounding hills and the clouds that float over it, so the soul of man, when all obscuring influences are removed, when the world is shut off and intellect is hushed, serene, and untroubled, can receive into itself without conscious effort those suggestions of spiritual truth which are in conformity with its own nature. This is the Hindu theory, but necessarily it is meaningless to those who do not recognise in their own minds any process corresponding to that which it describes. From the same cause arises the Western total misapprehension of the significance of all Indian religious usages. There is in our whole literature, I believe, no page more entirely pitiful than that which contains the criticisms of English missionaries and of the average English traveller on Hindu faith and discipline. It is not that Hinduism has not much that is vile in it when it becomes a question of its application to life; it is that these critics are, as a rule, utterly callous and cold to the original thought which inspired and still inspires it. They do not see what the Hindu is after, or

in the least comprehend the state of mind he is bent on attaining ; how, then, should they comprehend the means by which he seeks to attain it ?

For the two are indissolubly connected. From its conception of the soul as the knowing agent has followed, to take that side of the question which most offends people of our own race, the whole Hindu disciplinary system. The more intimately the soul, the Âtman, is realised as the source of knowledge, the more stringent becomes the need of asceticism to silence the claims of the world, since the intentness of the gaze which a man directs into his own soul is measured by the obliteration of all outward claims upon his attention. Hence it is that Hinduism, of which the one vital tenet is the soul's all-seeing power, is that form of belief which has reduced asceticism to a fine art. The reader must endeavour to grasp, if he would appreciate what is fundamental in Eastern life, the absolute all-importance in Eastern eyes of spiritual vision. The whole destiny of man, as the East understands the question, depends upon the attainment of that vision. It is not death, in the Hindu belief, which sets the spirit free, or ends the struggle in which it is engaged, but the spirit's own efforts, renewed again and again through the necessary number of incarnations. The struggle has to be faced, the final knowledge has to be attained. Thus while the Christian is like one who labours in a field and does a certain amount of work and in the evening expects pay according to what he has done, the Hindu is like one set to reap a field who, before he receives his wages, must reap it, be the time long or short. He himself, that is to say, in this or future incarnations, must surmount the illusions of temporal existence and emerge into the condition of pure spiritual consciousness. It is as the result of that thought that we have those terrible austerities which are so often held up by travellers and missionaries to the contempt of Western criticism. Before we condemn let us remember that the feelings with which we regard these practices will measure



the extent to which we ourselves possess the faculty they were intended to cultivate. To a generation barren of spiritual insight, to which the soul has ceased to be the Knower or source of light, asceticism must appear revolting because purposeless. None will readily give up what they have until they see clearly what is offered them in exchange. In short, the two ideals of spiritual vision and asceticism, so closely united in Hinduism, are natural associates. Whenever the soul has been conceived of as the knowing subject, then and there the desire to enhance its capacity by shutting off external and distracting influences has always existed. It matters not whether the spiritual idea be identified with a state of being or a personal God, if ever the soul of man becomes absorbed in the contemplation of that state or that God the inclination towards asceticism follows. Pagan philosophy, as it pressed its researches to the edge of matter and groped after spiritual perception, came in touch with the idea, in which Plato perceived an assurance of the attainment of absolute wisdom. The Hebrew seers and prophets, who heard God speak and were the channels of His revelations to His people on earth, abjured and cast off all earthly ties and interests that they might the better fulfil their spiritual mission. Clothed in sheepskins and goatskins, "they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth." So, too, those communities of Judæan monks, the Essenes and later the Therapeutists, cultivated in the same way the piety and knowledge of heavenly things for which they were so venerated by systematic austerities, dwelling apart from man in the deserts of Egypt or on the desolate shores of the Dead Sea, and renouncing all that makes life tolerable to ordinary people. Similarly again in Europe, through the monastic ages, or ages of faith as they are sometimes called, the idea of the soul as the "Knower," as a faculty that instructs rather than as a trophy to be saved, brought asceticism in its train. He who would listen to the voice of God, whether he be a Hindu Yogi, a Hebrew prophet,



or a Christian monk, must rid himself of all hindrances from the world. The reasonableness of such a view has been appreciated in all periods of spiritual insight. At such times the contemplative life has been looked upon almost as one of the regular professions, and those engaged upon it as professors of the heavenly science. They received the honours paid to those who excel in a branch of learning of which all appreciate the rudiments.

Before leaving this Eastern thought let us cast a glance at the life which has grown out of it. Passive and dreamily quiescent, ineffective in all the practical affairs of life, childishly and pathetically helpless, yet haunted by mystical visions of truths too deep for words, the life of India seems made out of the thought it has dwelt on so long, the thought that the spiritual only exists and that materialism is a delusion and exists not at all. It is strange to see how, just as the choking of a spring will parch a whole oasis, the denial of materialism at the fountain-head of Indian thought has cast its shadow over the whole of Indian life, charming it and laying a spell upon it so that it can touch nothing material to any purpose. What would a potter achieve who, while his fingers pressed the clay, was persuaded in his mind that there was no clay there for him to press? How feeble and wandering, how pathetically uncertain would the touch of his fingers become! It is so India deals with life. Intellect is that faculty which concerns itself with the universe and with life under its present, human conditions. It may rise to a dim perception of something beyond; but, if it does, that is its final effort, a half-despairing grasp after a long climb at a prize too high for it to reach. Its real life is the life of this world. Its activity and efficiency here have full scope. It appears to be an outgrowth of the observation of natural phenomena and the operations of cause and effect; and, in short, in making himself comfortable in this material universe, in analysing and exposing its processes and secrets and turning them to his own account, intellect is

man's chief ally and guide and instrument ; and so much does it grow itself by means of this kind of activity that it may be said that all the circumstances of this human life and the facts of the visible universe are the natural food of the intellectual and reasoning powers and the source from which they derive sustenance and nourishment.

No wonder, then, that Eastern philosophy should have acted on intellect as it has done. The denial of human existence and the visible universe meant the entire cutting off of intellect's food supplies. In the scheme of things divined by Hindu intuition intellect had no part to play or function to perform whatever. The pastures destined for it to graze on have been laid waste. Let the reader consider the consequences. One half of character in the East is blighted. All the results which belong to intellectual activity we look for there in vain. Indian literature has but one note. Its sole endeavour is to express the inexpressible, to define the indefinable. It follows the lead of India's one thought, and pores and dwells on that to the exclusion of all other matters. Again, all the knowledge which in the West has flowed from the consideration of natural phenomena is lacking to the East. The East can treat nothing intellectually and with a sense of its reality. Not only cannot it treat Nature and the laws and forces of Nature in this way, but it cannot treat man and man's history in this way either. It has no sense of actuality, no wish to discern how things happened or why or in what order they happened. Oriental history is half guesswork and half myth. None of it conveys the least feeling for reality. The truth is that the East has not developed the faculty whose function it is to deal with reality. The intellectual faculty in the East has become atrophied owing to an exclusive cultivation of the emotional faculty.

But still, when we have said everything there is to say against the Hindu idea, when we have shown that it is voiceless and dumb, that it cannot sympathise with human nature and human life, that its influence has been

to cripple intellect and deter the race under its sway from any participation in the opportunities of this earthly state, or realisation even of the beauty and significance of the universe—when we have said all this, the idea still remains the highest ever evolved by man. It is an express recognition of man's spiritual nature as a source of knowledge and light. It asserts the acquisition of wisdom not through the mind but through the soul. This is what is of such inestimable value, for this is what places the spiritual cause on the only possible safe foundation.

All the great emotional conceptions which have influenced the West—asceticism, monasticism, mysticism, the contemplative philosophy, and I know not how many other things of the same kind—have come out of the East ; just as all the intellectual and scientific ideas which have reached or are reaching the East have come out of the West.

So it always has been and so it still is. The East is permanently and at heart emotional, the West permanently and at heart intellectual. And so much is this the case that these opposite faculties have gradually worked themselves out into all the circumstances of the life of East and West. They have supplied their own standards of success and failure, their own solution of all social and political problems, their own ideals and traditions in religion, morals, and conduct. Intellectualism in the West has built up one kind of solution of life's problem ; emotionalism in the East has built up another and quite different solution. No two systems could be more at variance than the whole mass of beliefs, observances, habits, and customs which Eastern and Western life have respectively accumulated, yet each in all its parts is consistent. Both systems possess a certain unity ; the Eastern because it is all an outgrowth of the emotional root, the Western because it is all an outgrowth of the intellectual root.

It is as these things affect the lives of the people that they seem to me most significant. Their influence is to

be traced through the tiniest channels and verified in the most trivial circumstances. Well do I remember, many years ago though it was, the arrival in our remote village of the first reaping machine. It was painted blue and red, and the farm-hands and neighbours came and hung about it, admiring and wondering, while the farmer, intoxicated with a sudden sense of greatness and the stirrings of a vague ambition, called to the girls to bring cider, and while he handed round the jug, explained to us how in these days a man must keep abreast of the times ; how it was not enough to do as our fathers and grandfathers had done, but that it behoved us to be on the look-out for ideas and catch on to these new inventions and things we heard so much of ; and how he was one of that sort and had always had these thoughts and would probably be found more forward in the race than some people expected yet, though he was not one to talk much. And then the rest applauded and admired him, and to all the thought came how splendid a thing progress was and how fine it was to be one with the purpose of the age.

I read in a story once an account of the smash-up of the ice-floe in the Northern seas by the incoming tide ; of the pounding and ripping of the huge masses detached and broken up and grinding against each other ; and how, to two watchers far off, the sound came as a faint murmur ; and how a shaving of whalebone, which one of them had set up in the ice, barely quivered, yet quivered, to the distant shock. Even so the great days of science were heard of faintly in that distant and sleepy village of mine. Yet were they heard of. Men and lads now and again stopped and bent their heads to listen to the far-off sounds, and every little household quivered an imperceptible response to them. We never guessed at the restlessness they were instilling ; but by and by one lad left, and then another, drawn by that distant lure. The places that fell vacant in farm and field were filled less often by the young, upspringing generation than by a sort of feckless and spiritless residuum of the rural



population which sluggishly circulated about the countryside, deteriorating in quality and quantity as years went by. Everything that had any ambition, any ear for the drum and quickstep of the race, had gone off long ago to join the forward and progressive march of Western intellectual civilisation.

And then, from these memories, my thoughts drift to the low country of Ceylon, and I see in mid-jungle the Cingalese huts clustered under groves of palms, secluded and shut off from the world. I see a life which from day to day and year to year aspires but to repeat itself ; which relinquishes itself to the care of circumstances and lets time, flowing by, carry it like a fly upon its current. All details of those scenes, as they glide before me, bear out this sense of a passive acceptance of life. The great fawn-coloured gentle oxen with their slow motion and languid ways, the monotonous, tuneless chant from some figure lolling in the shade of slanting palms, the heavy scented air, the tom-tom's droning throb, the slow-moving glossy river, and, when evening falls, the velvet shadows weaving their spells around, sprinkled with the living gold-dust of fire-flies ;—so, in brief, all the sights and sounds and scents of those scenes combine to utter that deep but still emotion,

Felt in the blood and felt along the heart,

which has penetrated with its influence the Eastern temperament.

For passive as this simple village life is, there exists among these people a spirit of dignity and gentleness which suggests that some influence works for good in them, though it is not the influence that acts on Western life. I have often thought that, between these dreamy Indian villagers and the Indian seers and mystics, there exists the same sympathy as exists between our own peasants and the leaders of Western thought. The huts on the Kaluganga, like the cottages on the Exe, were stirred by thoughts that came from afar. The wisdom of the Hindu sage, which consists in nothing but pure and perfect



receptivity, is popular in the East in the same sense in which the practical knowledge of the scientist or the expert is popular in the West. The race, that is to say, recognises in that direction its own natural bias and outlet. Eastern life is saturated with mysticism. The anchorites and ascetics, so honoured and revered, who make their lonely lairs in Indian jungles, and the wandering mendicant fakirs who prowl along the highways, deal but in degrees of the same gift. Knowledge in their idea is revelation. It comes not of thought or conscious study, but is freely given to the contemplative soul which in stillness receives and in stillness enjoys the divine inspiration. This in India is a common thought ; indeed it has been laid down as a rule of life there that all men at a certain age, having fulfilled their duties as citizens and to their families, should sever all earthly ties and adopt the vocation of avowed visionaries.

Such people, I say, are understood in India because their view of life is, after all, the people's view. That attitude, emotionally sensitive yet too passive almost to be called content, in which the Indian peasant accepts what the days bring, is the raw material, and contains the germ of the whole Upanishad philosophy. It is natural that such a one should feel himself sustained by the presence of these holy hermits, for it is in their wrapt contemplation of spiritual things that his own gentle acceptance of earthly things is countenanced and justified. The one is the complement of the other, and together they pervade the East. Hence the unity of Eastern life. No eager pioneers beckon those docile natives along the path of progress—or if such there be they excite little attention, little enthusiasm—yet are they conscious of dim possibilities of development and growth. They are one with the spiritual instinct which is indigenous in India, and the childlike simplicity with which they contemplate their rice fields and banana trees is the beginning of that sterner serenity with which their high priests contemplate the infinite.

These two tendencies then, as I take it, founded on opposing faculties and pulling opposite ways, are what make the difference between Eastern and Western life and temperament. When we speak of the "wisdom of the East" we have in mind the exercise and effects of the emotional faculty; and when we speak of Western civilisation and progress we have in view the exercise and effects of the intellectual faculty. At the head of Western knowledge stand our professors and scientists and scholars and experts of one sort and another, devoted to practical experiment and exact definitions. At the head of Eastern knowledge stand sages and prophets and seers absorbed in abstract contemplation. Down from these, in long array, stretches on the one hand a society, orderly, alert, powerful, progressive, unrivalled in managing, superintending and organising, yet with a bias in its aims and ideals towards the mundane, the finite, the material; and, on the other, a society gentle, docile, sensitive to spiritual suggestions, but immobile, quiescent, ignorant, and ineffective. Both, however, are consistent and of a piece. Western life is of a piece because, broadly speaking, intellectualism is the root of it; and Eastern life is of a piece because, broadly speaking, emotionalism is the root of it. So deep into the tissue of thought and character goes the abyss which separates East and West.

The bearing of this upon art will, I hope, in the following chapters be made plain. The idea which has by degrees saturated the Eastern mind and character is, as we have seen, a purely spiritual one, and, being purely spiritual, is formless and inexpressible. The *Âtman* is silence in the language of art as in the language of the tongue. The intellectual side of man's nature, which deals with the visible and concrete, is powerless to touch or handle this Eastern idea in any way. And the more the idea is cherished, the more exclusively it is looked to for guidance and light, the more intellect and the intellectual way of looking at things passes out of use. We have seen that this is so in life. We have seen that Eastern civilisation

has quite failed to grasp the intellectual significance of the material universe. So also it must be and is in art. Form is that element in art which responds to intellectual definition, and wherever the capacity for intellectual definition is lacking the development in art of the sense for form will be correspondingly feeble or altogether absent.

But there is another side to the matter. If the Oriental mood is closed to intellectual, it is accessible to emotional suggestions. It lays itself open to feeling. To that source the East looks for instruction and guidance and light, and deliberately it sets itself to cultivate its capacity for emotional receptivity. This too is a part of life, and this part of life naturally expresses itself in terms of colour. We may expect, then, that Eastern life will be as rich in colour as it is poor in form.

## CHAPTER III

### EASTERN AND WESTERN ARCHITECTURE

The effect which Eastern thought has had upon Eastern life and art. The intellectual laws which govern the life and art of the West have never applied to the life and art of the East.

THE most profound distinction which exists in the whole sphere of art is the distinction between Eastern and Western art. Whoever compares a number of Eastern with a number of Western buildings will have no difficulty in distinguishing at a glance between the two. Without reasoning about the matter he will be conscious that Oriental constructions wear a strange and entirely eccentric aspect which assures him that they never could have resulted from Western modes of thought. Moreover, the strangeness does not consist merely in unfamiliarity and is not to be explained by reference to the limits of personal experience. There are plenty of English people to whom a Greek temple, with its peristyle, or surrounding colonnade of shafts, standing clear from the walls of the cella within, is a totally unfamiliar mode of construction. Nothing indeed resembles it in modern architecture, and unless he had visited some of the remains of such buildings or studied the descriptions and illustrations in books devoted to the subject—which he would be the less likely to do since these books are among the duller in existence—the average Englishman would probably find the plan of a Doric temple quite unknown to him.

Yet none the less on that account would he easily

pick it out from any number of representations of Hindu, Burmese, Chinese, or Saracenic temples, mosques, topes, or pagodas, as a style of building which, though unfamiliar to his experience, was not unfamiliar to his intelligence. The actual plan and arrangement might be new, but the constructive methods would nevertheless seem natural and reasonable. His mind would be at home with it. He would never think of exclaiming at the sight of it, as he would at sight of a Buddhist tope or Burmese pagoda, "That is alien to me; that conflicts with all my ways of thinking and seems to me for some reason irrational and grotesque."

Let him enlarge the field of comparison; let him take down the volumes of Fergusson's *History of Architecture* which deal respectively with the styles of the East and the West, and look through the illustrations, and, broadly speaking, he will find the distinction we have drawn persistent. He will find that, whether or not he happens to be familiar with particular specimens, all the architecture of the West strikes him as comprehensible and appropriate and more or less in conformity with his ideas of what is right and reasonable; whereas directly he gets among Oriental structures he is like one moving among strange seas without chart or compass to direct his course. These forms, these constructive methods, have something in their very nature incongruous and foreign to his temperament. They are not so much ugly, or in any way repellent, as unintelligible. He stares at the unmeaning roofs of a pagoda, raised one upon another like a pyramid of parasols, or at some tope or temple so loaded with odd indecipherable sculpture that the stone appears to be crumbling away under the chisel, and staring is conscious of nothing but the gap which separates him from these things. What their æsthetic merits or demerits may be he would not undertake to say, for he does not possess any standard of criticism which can be applied to them. They are outside the domain of art of which he knows the laws and principles. The language they speak is gibberish to him.



It is this sense of estrangement, so universal, so unmistakable, so common an experience to all who look upon Eastern architecture or sculpture, that I would analyse. In what does it consist? It has nothing to do, as I have pointed out, with novelty, for a style of art may be new to us yet not give rise to any sense of estrangement at all. It must consist then in method, in the method, that is to say, or manner, in which structural laws are apprehended and carried out. The difference in character between Eastern and Western structural forms seems to show that the laws which underlie those forms are differently apprehended by East and West.

The law which governs Western architecture is not difficult to discover, for it is testified to not only by all Western successes but also by all Western failures. This Western architectonic law asserts that use shall govern form, or that form and function are one and the same thing. All the forces, pressures, and modes of resistance and support exercised throughout a building, in themselves invisible, are forces latent in the architecture, and it is the clothing of them in their appropriate garb of form which gives to the architecture its visible substance. Hence the more exactly the visible form assimilates to the invisible force the more perfect and truly architectonic a feature will it be.

This rule, authoritative throughout the West, is what raises architecture to the level of an intellectual art. It affords a basis for criticism which is absolute and irrefutable and cannot be explained away by any reference to personal or national tradition or usage. Probably of all styles of Western architecture that which is generally considered by competent critics to be the most typical and perfect so far achieved is the favourite style of the Greeks, the Doric style; and the Doric style occupies this exalted position because it is the style in which the rule we have been speaking of, the rule that form shall be dictated by function, is most scrupulously observed. So exactly are weight, support, and every

invisible pressure and resistance present in the structure, embodied in its several parts that, if the reader will conceive of this architecture, first as an array of invisible forces, the manifestation of which in concrete shape is to form the structure itself, and then if he will imagine the process of incarnation actually taking place, and weight, support, and every active and passive motive in the building each in turn putting on its flesh of stone—if he will imagine this happening and then turn his gaze upon a Doric temple, he will perceive that here is the reality of that imaginary transformation. Here, in column, capital, abacus, and the various members of the entablature, are structural features which are so much the image of the forces exerted that these forces may be said to have engendered them and visibly embodied themselves in their dimensions.

This is the reason why Greek architecture is usually referred to as pre-eminently intellectual. It is so because the principle it is guided by is intellectual in its own nature. The whole process of calculating the extent and direction of the forces at work and embodying them in concrete form is an intellectual process. Such forces being, as has been said, invisible must be apprehended by reason, and in the same way the form of the structural features answering to them must also be apprehended in the abstract, that is by reason, before they can take visible shape. How strictly this is so we shall easily perceive if we follow in thought the development of art in the West from its primitive to its developed stage. For what after all do we mean by the word primitive as applied to building? What is that rudeness which is apparent in the uncouth monoliths of Stonehenge? It is a mental rudeness, an absence of reasoning power. When we say that the rough moorland stones, stuck upright in the earth and supporting others as rough as themselves, are *shapeless* and without *form*, we mean that they are not adapted to the part they play; that is to say, that the nature and amount of the forces here

present have not been reasoned and thought out and embodied in these structural features. By and by when thought and experiment have done their work these features will approximate to their function. The process will be slow and tentative. In many a Saxon and early Norman crypt and chapel in England its progress may be traced. The ponderous arches and massive columns are as a rule greatly in excess of the demand made upon them. No sense of proportion between burden and support is apparent, for neither the amount of the burden nor the strength of the support is appreciated. The invisible forces engaged are miscalculated. Where they are obvious they are represented by huge features of quite unnecessary dimensions. Where they are not obvious they are perhaps not provided for at all. The consequence is that these structures are usually much too strong in some places and not nearly strong enough in others, and for all their bulkiness are liable to disintegration. They are concrete illustrations of a kind of puzzle-headedness. Their expedients are the operations of slow, not intellectually developed minds, groping, not quite successfully, after the nature and extent of the mysterious pressures and resistances which they are called upon to manipulate.

Admit, then, the Western theory that form and function are one, that form is merely the image of function, and you have a coherent critical standard applicable to Western art in its entirety. It would indeed be overstating the case to maintain that, even in Western architecture, this theory has been equally in all ages the ruling motive. It has sometimes been departed from, but under what conditions and with what results? Sometimes it has been departed from in a spirit of imaginative exuberance, or playfulness, as in some of the decorative detail of Gothic ornamental sculpture. These are liberties which a creative age permits itself. The main lines and framework of the structure remain rational and perfectly expressive of the part they are playing, while the non-

structural detail is allowed a measure of licence and by-play in the pursuance of its fancies. A more serious divergence from the rule, and one which is an infallible mark of corruption and decadence, consists in the misuse, or misshaping, of structural features in their structural capacity, as when Roman architecture exhibits, as it frequently does, the contrary and irreconcilable principles of the arch and the lintel so intermingled as to render the method and means of construction incomprehensible.

Such a style is essentially corrupt because it is intellectually defective, and in the same way much of late Renaissance architecture, in which structural features are broken or distorted, and fragments of pediments and of classic entablatures are introduced arbitrarily and where they have no business, is also for the same reason corrupt, since the forms employed give the lie to their uses. But still these exceptions do but prove the rule, for it may be said that wherever they occur on a large scale, wherever, that is to say, the constructive features of Western architecture fail to adapt their forms to the purposes they fulfil, the vicious and corrupt character of the style is always recognised. This is in fact our test. Right through the history of our architecture it operates. Architecture which, in the main, in all its fundamental and evidently structural features—those features which uphold the edifice, on which its security depends, columns and arch and buttress and flying buttress—recognises the law that form is function, is architecture which has an affinity with our own temperament and which we feel to be akin to ourselves. This is the common and unifying attribute which, in some cases more, in others less, permeates all Western styles. In short, it may be said that the architectonic instinct of the West is intellectual in its essence, for it is based and founded on the idea that an intellectual conception of the various activities which make up a building is the means by which the appropriate formation of its structural features is attained.



If with this thought in his mind the reader will turn again to a collection of Eastern designs he will at once distinguish in what the sense of estrangement with which they inspire him consists. Oriental designs, Oriental buildings, Oriental structural forms do not acknowledge the intellectual law of the West. To the Eastern temperament it does not seem, and never has seemed, at all particularly desirable, let alone necessary, that the feature which does this or does that should take to itself the outward form and dimension of the act which it is performing. The Egyptian knew of no reason why he should not fashion his columns in the likeness of a lotus, or bulb, with narrow base and distended bulk ; or, if he was a native of that other river valley, the twin cradle in which man's earliest civilisation was rocked, he would readily surmount his shafts with attenuated and lofty capitals, half as high as the shafts-themselves and of a complicated inexplicable design which bore to their structural use no relation of any sort or kind. But it is amid the teeming jungles of India that the mere multiplication of superabundant forms apart from purpose or function has been carried to its greatest lengths. The pedestals of the famous tope at Sanchi are not only mangled with sculpture out of all semblance of strength, but are surmounted, by way of capitals, by uncouth groups of elephants so fashioned that the precarious support of the superstructure upon their jewelled howdahs remains an absolute mystery. The columns at Nahapana rest their short octagonal bulk upon big globes, and rejoice in capitals which seem to be composed in the first place of huge upturned basins, on the diminished end of which is built up by degrees a kind of platform, with oxen and other beasts crouched upon it, and the lintel of the entablature somehow reposing in their midst. "What a chaos!" a Western critic cannot help exclaiming ; "what a mere mess and jumble of matter undisciplined and uncontrolled by any rational purpose!" Indeed these so-called columns do not to Western eyes wear the form of



columns at all. We give them that name, for if they were anything nameable they would be columns, but they are not what the word suggests, for what the word suggests to us is a feature made in the likeness of the function which it is fulfilling, and these are not so made.

I do not think it necessary to refer, save in passing, to the buildings of Java, Burmah, Siam, China, or Japan. They are all, as regards the point we are emphasising, of the same character; that is to say, they one and all have the habit of evolving structural features the forms of which bear no relation to their structural use. This is the note of Orientalism. Just as we said of Western architecture that the bond of union between it all is the recognition of the principle that form is dictated by function, so we may say of Eastern architecture that its bond of union consists in the negation of that principle. It may indeed be affirmed that the Oriental builder frequently seems to take a pleasure in purposely outraging this principle. He appears to delight in twisting and distorting his arches and columns and capitals until their real use and real form are disguised beyond recognition. Moreover, to this abuse of the sense of form must be added, what is its inevitable effect, a tendency on all occasions to indulge in exuberance and superfluity of adornment. The desire, where it exists, to articulate structural forms with the utmost precision and clearness must naturally tend to preserve a certain smoothness of surface and purity of outline; but once that desire is removed there is no safeguard against the invasion of a whole wilderness of decorative accessories. This tendency to a loaded and lavish style of decoration will seem to many the most characteristic of Eastern traits. In a sense it is so. The Temple of Nakhon Wat, for example, is, I suppose, the most magnificent building on a huge scale which exists in Siam. In some respects it is not Eastern at all, for in many of its details it exhibits the influences of the classic style. But this has no effect whatever on its general appearance, which is so

smothered in the rankest decorative vegetation that the classic motives and suggestions of form pass unheeded. This tendency to over-enrichment is, as I say, prevalent in the East, but it is important to notice that it is only prevalent because the intellectual appreciation of the quality of form is absent, or at least is weak. The more form is honoured, the more it is felt to be a sufficing and paramount merit that a structure should exhibit the forces which are inherent in it, the more care will be taken not to obscure and encumber that expression by superfluous additions. There is no surer sign of the architectonic gift than an instinctive inclination to rely, for main influence and effect, on the essential structural purposes of the fabric. Nothing, in Western eyes at least, can ever stand instead of this, or be a recompense for its loss. No eccentricities or ingenuities, no prodigal, heaped-up enrichments can offer to the mind of man the satisfaction which the curt, stern outline of those features offers whose crowning merit is the duty they perform.

My object is to indicate a prevailing bias, rather than to lay down a hard and fast rule. In reviewing the whole extent of so vast a subject it would obviously be misleading to be too dogmatic. It would be misleading to affirm that Eastern architecture is never under any circumstances structural in form and distinct in articulation. The very art of architecture itself so depends for its existence on the forces which govern it that it only needs to be let alone, so to speak, in order to give expression to those forces. Violence must be used to hinder it from giving such expression. Naturally, therefore, it cannot always be hindered. Naturally, even in the East, it is sometimes left free, or half free, to express its own laws and principles ; so that, if the reader set himself the task, he may be able to cull from Eastern styles instances which may seem to conflict with what has been said. Yet if he takes a more general survey of the Eastern and Western styles of building in two vast groups, he will

see that they are none the less opposed by the very different estimation in which they hold the intellectual law of which we have spoken. That form and function ought to be one and were intended to be one is an idea which perpetually haunts the Western intelligence. It may now and again be obscured or betrayed, but it inevitably recurs. It lights the art upon its way from its first primitive experiments to its loftiest triumphs, and the art itself may be said to be vicious or vital in the degree in which it acknowledges this law of its being. Nothing of the sort applies to the East. The law of the West is there no law at all. It may now and again assert itself, but it leads a surreptitious and furtive existence, receiving no honours and no open acknowledgment, but subject on the contrary to a constant series of more or less flagrant snubs and outrages. I say it is this very remarkable difference in estimation in which the law of form is held which constitutes the difference between Eastern and Western architecture.

But if this is so it stands to reason that the same difference will manifest its effects in many directions besides art. Art is an expression of life. It exhibits the qualities which life itself contains. If Western art, broadly speaking, is intellectual and Eastern art non-intellectual, it is bound to follow that Western life, in all its activities and enterprises, must be intellectual, and Eastern life non-intellectual.

This is a test to which our estimate can be easily and immediately submitted. Whoever is in doubt as to its validity can call in the evidence of Eastern life and Eastern civilisation. The point has been touched upon in the preceding chapter, but let me briefly return to it again. To what subject shall we first turn as being typical of intellectual initiative? I have said that science is absent from Indian civilisation, and there is no doubt that the kind of knowledge we think of as scientific is essentially an intellectual knowledge. It has nothing in common with that other kind of knowledge

which is the fruit of passive contemplation and which may be defined as a purely spiritual gift or faculty. Intellectual activity proceeds by the reverse method. It analyses material substances ; it reasons and reflects on Nature's laws ; it puts its faith in much study and research, and in the accumulation of facts. The results of its labours can be defined and verified. Science is more especially its own peculiar product. If we conceive of all knowledge as the offspring of the intellectual and spiritual faculties, then it may be said that science is the child which most favours its male parent, intellect. It has little or no feeling in its composition. It dislikes and distrusts the fleeting glimpses and visionary intuitions vouchsafed to the spiritual faculty of things beyond our daily life. It is a firm believer in the here, the now, the visible, the concrete, in all facts that can be proved, all theories that can be verified, and, generally speaking, in all those ideas which are controlled by the operation of the human reason.

Such as it is—with limitations no doubt, yet immensely efficient in its own sphere—this is the faculty which has had most perhaps to do in building up the imposing edifice of Western science. Where, let us now ask, is the corresponding Eastern edifice ? The East, like the West, possesses an ancient and venerable civilisation ; a civilisation in some respects more profound and subtle in thought than that of the West. No human words have probed to the quick of spiritual consciousness so surely as the words of the Indian mystics. But, with this depth of spiritual thought which belongs to it, where is that wing of the structure of civilisation which belongs to intellect and which it is the especial province of intellect to create ? Where is Eastern science ? We ask the question in vain, and the more we ask and the more we seek, the more huge and yawning becomes the gap in Eastern civilisation which that which we are seeking for should have filled. Certain rudiments are discernible. We may say of science, as we said of architecture, that,



its own laws being inherent in the nature of things, the mere use of natural substances tends to illustrate those laws. The A B C of science, which consists in the turning to human account of the animal, vegetable, and mineral material which Nature has provided, may be said to be a common human heritage, so implicit indeed in the properties of matter as to be shared in by animals. It is on this as a basis that the reasoning faculty proceeds to build up, stone by stone and story by story, the stately erection we call science, and it is when we look in Eastern life for this characteristic building-up process carried out by the reasoning faculty that we are struck by the absence of any such phenomenon. There is no Eastern science, and, what amounts to the same thing, for the work of the reasoning faculty is essentially continuous and accumulative, there is no Eastern progress. Where the East is to-day, save in certain particulars which it has adopted from the West, it was, to all outward seeming, a thousand years ago, or two thousand years ago, or three thousand years ago.

And besides science there are other important and dominating departments in which intellect and reason play a leading part. One of these is literature. What is the general trend and character of the literature of the East? It is easily seized. Eastern literature is extraordinarily diffuse and subtle in its dealings with the abstract and metaphysical aspects of spiritual consciousness, but is almost totally barren in those spheres of mundane interest presided over by intellect. The speculations of Indian mystics and seers on the nature of the soul and the insight which belongs to the soul are without end; but turn to those branches of literature which deal with the affairs of earth, with the history of the Indian people, and which glean for present use the experience of the past, and you will be confronted immediately with that void which always rewards a search for intellectual activity in Indian affairs. History and historical and biographical studies and essays of all kinds are, it need scarcely be



pointed out, the especial care of intellect in the domain of literature, for all such works are based on the endeavour to see and understand past events as they actually happened and to extract their human significance. This is an act of reason and of thought. The wild fables of barbaric ages, in which human and superhuman are inextricably blended, the ballad narratives in which the doubtful exploits of chiefs or clans are eloquently but inaccurately celebrated, give place, with the growth of the reasoning faculty, to the desire to observe and narrate truly and to think dispassionately over past events. The appearance of this desire marks the birth of history as we know it, and among Western nations it has always shown itself quite early, the wish to record, however rudely, a narrative of things as they happened being evidently in the West a primitive instinct.

But in the East it has never shown itself at all. That purely reasoning and thinking intelligence which delights to ponder on the actions of man, which weighs and sifts evidence, and excavates buried sites, and pores over ancient documents, and interprets strange cuneiform or hieroglyphic inscriptions in the longing to arrive at a rational and true estimate—that purely intellectual intelligence never has, so far as the testimony of Eastern literature is concerned, animated the Eastern mind.

And apart from literature and science there is one other more general concern of life in the conduct of which reason and intellect are the obviously acknowledged guides. I am thinking of the general tenor of our laws and the system on which, whether by Parliamentary or local government, we manage our affairs. I am thinking of our Public Offices and Government Departments, of the business-like capacity and method by which vast revenues are collected and such immense organisations as the Army and the Navy and the civil service are maintained and administered. And in the same way I am thinking of the way in which this reasoned-out system is applied to cities and country towns and districts, of the

work of local government, the maintenance of roads, the supply of water and of light, sanitation, the administration of justice, the educational system, and a score of other moulding influences which bear upon the lives of all of us and which in their entirety constitute a standard and scheme of life which all the Western nations have adopted and to which they have all more or less equally contributed. It is needless to insist on the fact that this is a reasoning and reasoned system, for that it is so is palpable. Like all other intellectual phenomena, its growth has kept pace with the growth of the intellectual faculty. Turn back to barbaric ages and the scheme is lacking. Follow the course of the centuries, and as the savage age recedes and the reasoning capacity, which governs progress, dawns and brightens, so this scheme of rational management confirms its hold on the life of the community. It is necessary perhaps for the reader to have spent some years in the East for him to realise how totally any such intellectual scheme or framework is lacking to Eastern life.

In whatever direction we look, then, whether to literature, to science, to the arrangement and control of human life in town and country, we shall be struck by the absence in Eastern life of that law of reason which prevails in the West. More even than that, the visitor to the East will be conscious, in the very air he breathes, in the influence given off by society, and, generally speaking, in the tone and bias of thought in which the East is steeped, of an exactly similar deficiency. When Mr. Kipling's soldier solicits the War Office to ship him "somewhere east of Suez where the best is like the worst," and where, as he proceeds to point out, there "ain't no ten commandments" to impede individual initiative, he is but expressing the longing which impulsive natures are apt to feel to win free from the whole system of rational routine by which Western life is controlled. It is not in reality the ten commandments that he desires to escape from so much as that constant supervision of the rational sense demon-

strated through the action of laws and customs, town councils and boards of guardians, petty sessions, newspapers, and public opinion, which penetrates and enfolds the whole of Western life. That other life, the life of the East, appeals to him as an enfranchisement from this too strict control. Yonder, at last, those elements in his nature which are irrational and purely emotional can be given the free play which the rigorously intellectual West refuses them.

None of the rules of life of the West apply to the East, and pressed through all modes of outward expression to the common source of human nature, the explanation of all such differences is found to consist in the fact that the Western world has accepted the intellectual law of reason, and has gradually arranged and built up a scheme of life in obedience to that law, whereas the East has not done this but has accepted a scheme dictated by emotional impulses. The cabals, treacheries, massacres, revolts, palace-plots, and unceasing web of intrigue which make up so large a share of Eastern politics, what are they but the wild overgrowth of caprices which, in the lives and daily habits of men, assert themselves when rational control is withdrawn?

Once more before reverting to architecture as an epitome of all this, let me guard myself against the charge of arbitrary and sweeping generalisation. There is an order of critics, with whom I have had many dealings, who are hindered by the least exception or qualification from accepting any broadly self-evident truth. Not every "ancient civilisation" of Egypt, Assyria, India, or the Far East which makes a fine show is necessarily to be regarded as in any sense an intellectual achievement. Time, servile labour, a merely manual dexterity, an unreasoning tradition operating on successive generations, the custom of ages, and the tyranny of kings—these are agents which, apart from the free use of intellect, can produce not inconsiderable results. Many of these Eastern civilisations have been to a very large extent ant

and bee civilisations, civilisations of routine. But still, admitting all such possible qualifications as the reader may be able to discover, I am well assured that a broad and general comparison of the histories of East and West, from the time, six or seven centuries before Christ, when the Hindu seers revealed their mystical spiritual doctrines and the Greek thinkers laid the foundations of physical science, will abundantly confirm the statement that intellectualism, which has been accepted as the law of life in the West, never has been accepted as the law of life in the East.

This is the state of things to which Eastern architecture bears witness. The traveller who, turning the page of his memory, compares all that he has seen of European with Oriental buildings, and the reader who turns the pages of Fergusson's *History* and carries out in a series of illustrations a similar comparison, will find themselves dealing with the outward and visible signs of an inward mental difference which always has divided East from West. The law of the West, let me repeat it, which affirms that form is function is in its essence an intellectual or reasoning law. It is so because it deals with an idea which has to be intellectually conceived before it can be turned to practical account. The reader will observe that in the West this intellectual law of form operates in architecture by the same degrees as in other fields. I pointed out just now that in matters of science, of literature, and in the general government and control of urban and country life, growth and development have gone hand in hand with the growth and development of intellect. Our test of civilisation generally is intellectual maturity. What we call the Dark Ages were the ages which preceded the first signs of the intellectual awakening. So, too, the degrees of progress from barbarism to enlightenment are registered in architecture by the development of intellectually conceived forms. Tamperings with the law there have been; vicious practices and corrupt fashions have often veiled or vulgarised the ideal at which we were



aiming ; yet whoever traces from its rude beginnings the art of construction in the West, and meditates on the conformation of the structural features which it has evolved, will acknowledge, not only that the functional law has constantly operated, but that it holds in Western architecture just the same position of supremacy and command which intellect in other spheres of activity maintains over Western life. It is the great architectonic law of the West. It images and embodies in art the pre-eminent influence which intellect has achieved in Western life.

This he will acknowledge ; and turning then to the East he will find the law break down and collapse, and his very standard of right and wrong fail him in consequence. What are these extraordinary shapes, these complex indeterminate arches, these weird bulbous columns of no fixed shape or outline, these hobgoblin roofs and monstrous protuberances and excrescences, these surfaces that rot with ornament, this indeterminate sculpture that ramifies and spawns in every corner, eating the stone, moth-like, to rags and tatters—what is the explanation of it all, or why do such words as fantastic, eccentric, whimsical, capricious, and the like spring to our lips to describe it ? The answer is simple. All these portents are rendered possible by the abolition of the law of function. They represent the invading jungle of whims and impulses which always spring up when the controlling hand of reason is withdrawn. Thus both in East and West art and life go hand in hand. Placed side by side, the two world-styles of architecture illustrate and drive home two facts of commanding significance. The first is that the tendency of the West is to rely in the main on the reasoning faculty ; the second is that, whatever means of enlightenment the East possesses—and it may be she possesses means as important as ours—it is certainly not to the reasoning faculty that she looks for guidance.



## CHAPTER IV

### BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE

In what respects the Byzantine style of architecture, which is an adaptation by the Greeks of Oriental ideas of colour, is found to be a perfect embodiment of Eastern thought.

It will very likely seem to the reader a somewhat unwarranted proceeding to use a style of Christian date and origin, such as the Byzantine style of architecture, as an expression of something so seemingly alien to it as Eastern philosophic thought. But the connection between the two is really a very intimate one. I have said, and I shall perhaps often have to repeat, that the two main ideas with which all art is concerned have been separately contributed, one by the West, the other by the East. Form, as we were saying, is chiefly a matter of the intellect. The arts which deal with form convey ideas. Their appeal is to the mind. Colour, on the other hand, conveys no ideas. It is emotional and appeals to the senses rather than to the intellect. And this being so, it seems natural that the Western temperament, intellectual rather than sensuous, should excel in form rather than in colour; while the Eastern, sensuous rather than intellectual, should excel in colour rather than form.

Certainly what the East and West mean by colour are two very different things. That swarthy and deep, half-melancholy richness which is the note of Eastern colour does not belong to the West. At least it is not indigenous to Western *life*, and when found in the West its presence

may probably be traced to Eastern origin or influence. The characteristic of Eastern colouring is a strength of tone so full and rich that it conveys a sense of sober gravity, even of a certain severity, which has nothing in common with the feeble temerities of our "neutral tints" and "half tones." The eye rests upon it undistracted and feeds in contentment, secure in the consciousness of the ample store at its disposal.

There is in such a conception of colour that union of strength and simplicity which reveals itself only when a nation is dealing with the things which it understands and which correspond to its own genius. To match the Eastern sense for colour we must have recourse to the Western sense for form. In the Norman arch and the Doric shaft we shall find that strength and simplicity which belong to colour in the East. On the other hand, Eastern form is entirely wanting in those very characteristics which distinguish Eastern colour. Its constant aspiration is to be fantastical and ingenious. To revert in thought to Chinese, Indian, or Arab architecture is to conjure up the idea of a medley of involved and eccentric shapes which seem to express every kind of whim of the imagination, but which never by any chance express the qualities of simplicity and strength. The resemblance between form used in this way and our Western use of colour is a profound one. Both are equally marked by weakness and indecision. Both are capricious, unstable, constantly involved in experiments at once ingenious and trivial. The half tones and shades into which the strength of colour dissolves in Western hands are the counterpart of those weakly complicated features into which the strength of form dissolves in Eastern ones. In short, it seems as if Western form and Eastern colour are alike in character, and are remarkable for the same great qualities of simplicity and strength; and Eastern form and Western colour are also alike, and are remarkable for the opposite qualities of weakness and triviality. Of these it is the former pair that represent the positive

achievement and definite contribution of the two halves of the world to the sum total of art. The masculine, intellectual West has contributed the idea of form ; the feminine, emotional East has contributed the idea of colour.

But though the sense for colour is indigenous to the East, yet of an adequate expression of that idea, of its embodiment in any great work or school of art, the East never has been capable. Matthew Arnold, in his criticism of the Celtic spirit in literature, has some penetrating remarks on the character and capacity of the emotional faculty. The essence of his argument is that emotionalism, or feeling, though a most essential element in creative work, is insufficient of itself to create. Feeling and emotion, though they supply the inspiration, do not supply the form. For this is always needed the co-operation of the sterner, more matter-of-fact intellectual faculty. The Celtic race is full of poetry, is soaked and brimming over with the poetic sentiment, but it has always been unequal to the creation of important and monumental works of poetry because it has not been reinforced by an intellectual capacity capable of supplying the form, the argument, the architectonic or structural quality which is essential to poetry of first-rate importance. Short poems, poems as poignant and as brief as the spasms of emotion, tender or melancholy, which call them forth, the Celtic genius can produce. But when we seek to go beyond such a motive, when we ask for the large and ordered development which is based upon reason and thought, we are at a loss. Small, pure jets of feeling that genius will give us ; but such works as the essentially intellectual classic genius achieved, and as Europe after the intellectual rebirth of the Renaissance likewise developed, are beyond its compass.

The Oriental genius, with its essentially emotional and intuitive impulses, is similar to the Celtic, and therefore in the domain of art, though we may expect to find a host of minor sporadic evidences of the influence of its

spiritual thought, yet we must not expect to find that thought built up into a coherent and organic style. The Oriental character does not possess the intellectual capacity necessary for such a task. Eastern life and Eastern art do, in fact, teem with just the kind of evidences we should expect. Eastern silks and embroideries, Eastern gems and jewelry, Eastern decoration in wood or stone, Eastern rugs and carpets, Eastern tiles and pottery and glass, all these and many more such things glitter and glow with colour of the peculiar Oriental depth and lustre. But these are no more than equal to those "small, pure jets of feeling" and emotion which, as I have said, inform Celtic poetry. They testify to the profound emotionalism in which Oriental life is soaked, but they do not afford to that emotionalism an adequate and monumental expression.

The reader who knows the East will be aware of this inadequacy in its art. The idea of colour is indigenous to the East. Every one must feel that. Every one must recognise how interwoven the colour-sense is with the life and character of an Oriental people, so that it has become the ineradicable trait by which the Oriental is invariably distinguished. The gypsies who bivouac on English commons impart a whiff of their living sense for colour among us, and emphasise thereby our consciousness of their own foreign origin. Colour as they use it is a matter of life, and it assumes accordingly that note of depth and richness which no amount of studio-culture seems able to bestow on it. And yet, diffused throughout the life of the East as this colour-sense is, we look in vain for any great artistic manifestation, any school of painting or architectural style of Eastern origin and growth, which shall centralise and collect that colour-sense for us. The impotence which saps the emotional temperament has waited on the East. The qualities which make great achievements possible—discipline, patience, self-control, a strong will and a sober judgment—are wanting to it; and the consequence is, that though in Eastern countries

the appreciation of colour is universally diffused, yet the expression of it is restricted to such trivial illustrations as carpets and embroideries, tiles and pottery, or the dresses and ornaments of the people.

To realise the impotence of the East in the expression of its own ideal is to realise the significance of the part which the Byzantine Greeks were called upon to play. The reader will remember that Constantinople, founded in the fourth century, was built upon the site of an earlier Greek colony, the colony of Byzantium. The transformation of a remote provincial town into the capital of a great empire produced its inevitable effect in an outburst of artistic activity to meet the demands of a wealthy and luxurious society. As was natural in an Eastern capital, the resulting art concerned itself with the ideas proper to the East; that is to say, it concerned itself, mainly and fundamentally, with colour. So much was inevitable. What was not inevitable was the existence, on the spot selected for the Eastern capital, of a Greek colony, placed there, as might seem, with the express object of undertaking the control and management of the new art. Hitherto every attempt at a manifestation of the Eastern ideal had been baulked by the lack in the Oriental character of the qualities necessary for the carrying out of a great work. In this crisis, then, of the world's history, when the establishment of an imperial city offered so grand a field for the display of Oriental art, the unique opportunity was taken out of the hands of Oriental races altogether. What the Greeks had already done for the Western ideal of form they were now called on to do for the Eastern ideal of colour. Their colonies in the East had imbibed and assimilated the conception of colour common to the East, and the opportunity found them prepared to give a genuine artistic interpretation of it. As, in the temples and palaces of Egypt and Assyria, the fragments of rough form-delineation lay to hand which the Greek genius of an earlier age combined and harmonised into the perfect structure of the Doric temple, so



throughout the cities of Persia, Asia Minor, and the East the equally inarticulate attempts at colour-delineation were scattered which that genius was to shepherd and collect into the perfect representation of the Byzantine interior. The success of the Greeks in this latter task has resulted in the Byzantine style being the only really adequate expression of an ideal which forms one-half of the inspiration of art.

In the new Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster two of the chapels, one on the right and one on the left, have already received their mosaics. They form complete little specimens of the art in which they deal, but it so happens that several of the architectural features in either chapel are treated in different ways, and these different ways illustrate, as I hope to be able to show, very conveniently the principle on which Byzantine as a distinct architectural style is founded. That principle, which may be briefly stated at once, is that mosaic is to be used as the actual architectural material; that the nature of this material, soft, plastic, and flexible, is to dictate the entire arrangement and composition of the structure. It is never to be used superficially, as a mere surface adornment, but always as the architectural motive in obedience to which the main forms and proportions of the building are designed. Further, as the existence in a building of the usual sharply defined architectural features belonging to stone construction must always, when used in conjunction with mosaic, reduce the latter to a mere skin-deep covering (since these features at once declare the composition of the building to be not of mosaic, but of stone), it will follow that a second indication of the true Byzantine style, over and above the adoption of all forms suited to the softness of mosaic, will be the obliteration of the whole structural system belonging to stone architecture.

The two large window recesses, holding double-light windows, are common features of both the Westminster Cathedral chapels. The recesses of the right-hand chapel,

however, are rounded in the mosaic itself, and completely carried out in that material, whereas those of the left are formed of stone arches, the mosaic only beginning above the archivolt. This latter arrangement, and the appearance of the powerful stone arches as the supporting members, immediately proclaim the stone construction of the chapel, and reduce the mosaic to a quite superficial appearance in consequence ; while in the former case the rounding of the blunt angles in the gold produces on the spectator the impression that the whole wall is formed entirely of this substance. The difference between the two in effect and feeling is of a fundamental kind. In the right chapel the mosaic is used as the architectural material, and becomes naturally the motive of an architectural style. In the left chapel it is confessedly mere ornament—of a certain effect from that point of view, but entirely without architectural significance.

We need not, however, leave the right-hand chapel itself to have this contrast brought home to us. As though to illustrate at a glance the difference between what we may call the real mosaic style and the sham one, the architect has confronted his solid mosaic window arches with a pair, leading from the chapel into the aisle, treated, as the rival ones in the other chapel were treated, with sharply moulded and projecting stone archivolts. If the reader will glance from the flat gold surface framed in the stone construction on one side to the solidly turned arch wrought in the gold itself on the other, or if he will compare the stone arches with the recessed arch above the altar, which is another specimen of structural mosaic, he will be made instantly conscious of the enormous difference between the two ways of using the material.

And let us emphasise the point here, for it is a crucial one, that it is not a question only of degree of effectiveness between the two treatments. Probably most people will agree that the mosaic is more effective when carried right through the structure than when supported in a stone framework. But it is insufficient to put it in this

way. "More effective" conveys the idea of differing degrees of the same effect. This is a quite inadequate distinction. The two arrangements we are considering represent two totally different and opposed principles. One represents mosaic used constructively; the other represents it used decoratively. It will easily be perceived that the latter way of using it never could have originated a separate style. Architecture *is* construction, and therefore every differentiation of style is bound to be based on a differentiation of construction. This is what mosaic used in subordination to stone forms never could imply, for under these circumstances it is used merely as a superficial accessory in a structural arrangement with which it has no real concern. Once, however, it is allowed to form the substance of the structure, this idea of a differentiation of construction is just what it does introduce. It introduces the idea of a construction suited to a new material, soft and plastic, between which and stone or marble there is nothing at all in common. It is this assertion of the right of the material to institute laws in conformity with its own nature which marks the solid treatment of mosaic as the true index of the style.

We have, then, in the details of these Westminster chapels a clue to Byzantine art. There, in the couple of arches where the mosaic is used structurally, we have a specimen of the Byzantine style itself. Here, where it is subordinated to stone construction, we have a treatment which is not Byzantine at all; a decorative treatment of mosaic, only interesting as exhibiting the misconception under which the West, by reason of its allegiance to form, has always laboured in its dealings with the Eastern ideal of colour.

Having provided ourselves with the theory that the structural use of mosaic is the test of the Byzantine style, we may have recourse to a few of the chief examples of that style to see how such a theory applies. Probably Santa Sophia owes its generally conceded position as the central type of the style largely to its mere magnitude

and splendour, qualities which, though not unimportant, should not be allowed to outweigh principles of construction. The building is composed of a cluster of domes, rising one above the other, until they culminate in the wide, light central dome, which, perforated by a circle of tiny windows round its base, and almost detached from the main structure, seems, as Procopius long ago noticed, rather to float above the space beneath than to be built over it. This architectural arrangement has been much admired, and it is indeed expressive in a wonderful degree of a certain airy lightness and grace. The dome is the structural principle. The great central arc is upheld by two half-domes, which abut against and support its lower rim; while the transfer from the circular dome-bases to the square supports is effected by "pendentives," or dome-segments. Thus the whole system is raised on a succession of concave surfaces mutually self-supporting, and lesser domes, half-domes and segments of domes, holding together and rising like a pile of bubbles, realise their appropriate issue at last in the central, perfect specimen in which they all culminate, and towards which they all converge. "All these parts," says Procopius—and his remarks have been echoed since by almost every critic who has written on the church—"surprisingly joined to one another in the air, suspended one from another, and resting only on that which is next to them, form the work into one admirably harmonious whole."

And yet if we look for the motive of this harmonious whole we shall find that it lies rather in the endeavour to harmonise and simplify the composition of an earlier style than to formulate the laws of a new one. In general character, as well as in detail and ornament, Santa Sophia bears, as has often been pointed out, a strong resemblance to the stately palaces and *thermae* of the Roman Empire. Those earlier buildings, however, represent a confusion of the irreconcilable principles of horizontal and arched construction. In Roman archi-



ecture these two principles are almost always combined, and the spaces within the architrave and columns belonging to the former principle are bunged up with the arches and walls belonging to the latter. Now the Greeks had already in their temples carried the horizontal principle to its full and perfect expression, but they had never applied themselves seriously to the possibilities of the arch. This had hitherto been left to Roman development. Santa Sophia makes good the deficiency. Out of the unintelligible jumble of Roman construction the Greeks extricated the arch principle and proceeded to enforce it with their usual thoroughness. The dome is the arch form carried to completion. A structure arranged as a system of domes is, therefore, that in which the arch principle as a structural motive can be most consistently carried out. Santa Sophia is a composition arranged on such a basis. Those lofty curves, supported by and emerging from each other, and soaring upward until they sweep victoriously in a culminating effort across the vast central gap, are the most perfect representation that exists in the world of the resources and possibilities that are latent in the arch principle. The result they achieve, in its purity and consistency, is far beyond anything the Romans had any conception of.

Nevertheless, successful as the great experiment was, it was never repeated. That wonderful and almost fairy-like construction, which has excited the astonishment and admiration of so many critics, survives, in its kind, a solitary example of the Greek genius. It is true that the domical system has remained characteristic of the Byzantine style. It is also true that the arrangement by which the thrust of the dome was received by the pendentives and transmitted by them to the supports constituted a structural principle which was a distinct addition to the science of architecture. Nevertheless, this newly invented domical system was never again used as it had been in Santa Sophia. It was never again used to demonstrate the beauties and resources of the arch



principle. What it was used for was to demonstrate the beauties and resources of mosaic as a building material—a quite different object, as we shall presently see.

On the completion of Santa Sophia an alternate confronted the Byzantine architects. Santa Sophia, as it stands, is a study of form. The mosaics with which it is lined are of no real significance. As we saw in the Westminster chapels, mosaic does not become an architectural motive and determine an architectural style until it changes, in accordance with its own nature, the whole architectural composition. But the architectural composition of Santa Sophia is not in the least affected by its mosaics. Those light and lofty curves, so crisply defined, so clearly constructive, were not designed to show off the richness and substance of a flexible material. They were designed as studies of form, and they compose a clearly articulated structural arrangement. As for the effect of such an articulation on the mosaics themselves, it is, as usual, to reduce them to a mere surface covering. It is obvious at a glance that with the composition of the architecture they have nothing to do whatever. They are, therefore, as here used, a decorative, not an architectural, motive.

And this is generally admitted, even by those who accept the building as the type of the Byzantine style. Fergusson, a critic for whom all lovers of architecture must feel a great respect, has dwelt with emphasis on the structural beauty of this interior, which he declares to be unequalled by the great mediaeval cathedrals of Europe, and he then goes on to deal with the *decoration*—that is, with the mosaic. His judgment on this is, that, as decoration, it is carried too far. It detracts, he finds, from the severity which is essential to structural effect.

This criticism seems to me sound. I have pointed out that structural form kills mosaic by making it appear thin and superficial. But it is also true that mosaic has a tendency to vitiate structural forms by making them appear indecisive. A substance composed of tiny glass

particles embedded in a cement groundwork does not lend itself to perfect smoothness of surface or perfect sharpness and regularity of edge. The consequence is that, where mosaic is employed in conjunction with structural forms, the sense of decision and exactitude, which is the foundation of the whole effect of structural architecture, is weakened. This to some extent is the case in Santa Sophia. Wonderfully telling as those gradations of curves are, they would probably tell with even more decisive effect if the internal decoration were fresco instead of mosaic. Fergusson on this point is probably right. The structure here suffers from the presence of a decoration which is something more than mere decoration: which is in its own nature structural.

A choice, then, is here offered to the Greek architects. They may go on developing the arch principle, using that principle as the motive of a new architecture of form, in which case the mosaic idea must remain not only undeveloped, but had better perhaps be discarded altogether. Or they may, if they choose, make an entirely new departure by concentrating attention on the possibilities of mosaic and recognising in it the governing architectural motive. In this case it would be the structural forms that would have to be sacrificed, and, form sacrificed, it would be to the other great aesthetic motive that the new style would have to look for its effect—namely, to colour.

Fergusson's advice, as we have seen, under these circumstances is to sacrifice colour to form. From a Western critic such counsel was to be looked for. The Greeks, however, decided differently. For one thing, it is probable that they saw in the arch principle itself not a first-class vehicle for an interpretation of the idea of form—an idea which can only be rightly expressed when the whole structural arrangement is clearly defined, which again it can only be when the members that carry and those that are carried are instantly distinguishable.

In lintel architecture, where horizontal weight rests on vertical supports, the distinction is plain, and the consequence is that extraordinary significance is thrown into every feature. We may conjecture therefore that a race which had developed the idea of form on the principle of the lintel was not likely to be very deeply impressed by the possibilities of the arch. The Byzantine architects gave the principle a trial. They rescued it from the muddle-headed treatment of the Romans; they divined its character and capabilities; they wove it into a structure the most perfect of its kind that the world has seen, and then they turned their backs upon it for ever. Of all aesthetic criticisms the most scathing, to my mind, ever uttered, is that disdainful turning away of the Greek architects from a principle out of which they had wrought what, to most races, would have seemed an unqualified success.

They found compensation in that great Oriental idea which had never received due recognition in art. An interior, darkened and solemn, built out of solid gold and studded with figures and groups in swarthy crimsons and blues, might form such an illustration of the idea of colour as had never yet been dreamt of. On this thought the Greeks acted. They discarded at once and altogether those structural forms which had hitherto composed all that was meant by the word architecture, but the presence of which was bound to be fatal to the influence of the new material. Architraves and archivolts, cornices, galleries, pilasters, friezes, all were swept aside. Instead of these angular and exact features the forms employed in the new style must, if they were to conform to the nature of the new material, be as much as possible of curved and rounded shape. The vault, the apse, and the dome were selected, and became the characteristic features of the style. These were, however, to be used—and this is the distinctive mark of the style—not in the least as an exhibition of domical or arcuated construction, but solely as a vehicle for the display of the

new building material. The lofty array of curves which made the fascination of Santa Sophia is exchanged for a group of low, heavy domes, of immense depth and ponderous solidity. It would, indeed, be impossible to imagine any features more different in character than the Santa Sophia domes and those subsequently used in the style. The former, in their lightness, seem scarcely to rest upon the earth at all, and in their exquisite grace and variety form a singular triumph of structural art. The latter, much lower, darker, and thicker, seem rather like caverns delved out of the solid earth than buildings erected on its surface, and their squat proportions and plain curves are totally wanting in the Santa Sophia grace and variety.

A further change, in the same direction, was effected by the use made of light and shade. Few points are of more importance in Byzantine effects than this, and the system of *chiaroscuro*, as it may rightly be called, which they adopt is responsible for a great deal of the power and influence of Byzantine colouring. In Santa Sophia the light is brilliant throughout the church, and the consequence is that the mosaics pale their ineffectual fire and fade away into a feeble, ashen grey. It is only in the deep twilight of the later and more typical examples that that deep glow wakes which is the note of the style.

The modifications then made, after Santa Sophia, in the development of the new style seem to have been as follows: (1) All those features which conveyed the idea of a hard and exact structural material were discarded. (2) The lofty and varied dome system was exchanged for a few plain concaves of massive depth and substance. (3) The bright light, suitable enough for the display of form, was toned down to a solemn twilight in keeping with the effects of rich colour. These alterations are of so radical a kind that, if they are admitted as principles, they dispose at once of all pretensions of Santa Sophia to rank as the type of this style. At the same time the

reader will see that all these alterations were such as would arise naturally from a resolve to use mosaic not decoratively but structurally. If he were offered, himself, a supply of rich plastic material out of which to fashion an interior, he would find himself making the same alterations. He would find himself discarding intrusive suggestions of form, lowering and simplifying his vaults and domes and softening and toning down the light. The exigencies of the material would impose these measures upon him as the principles of the new art.

In tracing the Byzantine adoption of these principles we have to deal with a difficulty peculiar to the style. With most styles of architecture development is uniform and regular; the periods of the rise, the prime, and the decay are clearly traceable, and sufficient examples generally exist to place its characteristics beyond doubt. This is not the case in regard to Byzantine. That style is the sole instance known to us of a creative artistic impulse taking place in an Empire's decline. It owed its birth to the genius of a race which, alone among races, has pursued fitness in art disinterestedly and for its own sake. But other things beside genius are necessary to the triumph of art on a grand scale. A really great architecture especially demands much that decadent races find it hard to give. It demands a heavy outlay in time and work and money. Self-sacrifice is necessary to it and the power of combination and dogged perseverance. When we consider how poorly provided the Eastern Empire was in these virile qualities, how weakly self-indulgent, capricious, and unstable, it will not seem strange that its architectural accomplishment should be but trifling. Moreover, the Greeks themselves constituted but a fraction of the surrounding population. Deteriorated in its own character and swamped in a great empire that was passing into the apathy of its decline and fall, it is no wonder that the Greek race should have been unable to do for the new architecture of colour



all that its vigorous primitive sons had been able to do for the old architecture of form.

The result is that the Byzantine style, instead of being embodied in a great array of splendid and complete specimens, is rather discernible as an influence, often vague and impalpable, struggling to assert itself, now against languor and indifference, now against the opposition of other fashions and the prejudice of other races. There is no continuity about it ; scarcely an acknowledged definition can be attached to it. It is to be recognised as an introduction, among contradictory and conflicting aims, of a logical theory with an artistic effect of its own. There can be no better illustration, both of Byzantine art itself and of the obstacles with which it had to contend, than is afforded by the little group of Sicilian mosaic churches of the twelfth century, in which, amid the counter-influences of other races, the principles which the Byzantine artists were striving to enforce stand out with great distinctness. We will therefore turn for a moment to these for some further elucidation of the subject before coming to what I take to be the central specimen of the style.

In their combination of conflicting elements these Sicilian churches form a most striking character-study of the medley of races which some spirit of romance seems to have wafted here from the ends of the earth. The meeting of Norman and Arab, of the chivalry of the North and the South, is one of the dramatic moments of history. Translated into stone it is one of the dramatic episodes of architecture. The Norman strength, which had identified itself with the more massive and vigorous features of Romanesque and had already evolved the most impressive expression of that style existing in the North, is responsible for the plan and main features of much of the Sicilian architecture of that time. In curious contrast with that strength and solidity appears the fretful and involved Arabic detail. The Arab is the *enfant terrible* of Southern art. He interferes

with everything, and he interferes invariably to confuse, distort, and entangle. Whatever influence he exerts in these Palermo churches is invariably and entirely pernicious. To neither, however, of these curiously mingled and combined elements does Sicilian architecture owe its chief fascination. The traveller who looks at the massive Norman pillars or complicated Arab incrustations will feel that both of these races followed, in building, an instinct which neither paused to analyse and appreciate. Their architecture is an unreasoned expression of racial character. The element, lacking in them, of a disinterested pursuit of artistic effect is the contribution of the Greeks. Theirs was an influence exerted in favour of no personal prejudices, but constantly directed to the development of a uniform effect ; constantly employed in the effort to reject all that would clash with that effect and to single out and adopt all that would assimilate with it.

The Monreale Cathedral was begun in 1174. It is of considerable size, measuring 315 feet in length, and its imposing proportions and the splendour of its mosaic walls and marble wainscoting have secured it a high position among examples of the mosaic style. It has, however, several fatal defects. The roof of the nave is of horizontal wooden beams, much gilt and decorated in the Saracenic manner, and the place of the dome is taken by a construction of woodwork, painted and carved. It has been pointed out that, to convey the idea of mosaic used as structural material, the use of mosaic domes, vaults, and apses, the curved surfaces of which afford special opportunities for displaying the plastic beauty of the material, is essential. These features are in fact the strongholds of the style, and in proportion as it is weak or strong the carrying out of these positions in complete mosaic will be insisted on or failed in. On the other hand it is evident that features of such magnitude as domes and nave vaults are difficult and laborious works to complete in mosaic ; so that, by all who were inclined

to take the Western or decorative view of the material, it was just these positions that were most likely to be abandoned. The Greeks knew well what was at stake. So long as these deep, rich folds of gold dominate the interior, the substantiality of the walls and every part of the mosaic elsewhere is placed beyond a doubt. But let them go, and their place be taken by definite structural forms, and the credit of every atom of mosaic in the building is shaken. Here then, among these curves and hollows, is where the fight between Greek and Barbarian, the fight which has for its issue whether the whole theory of mosaic is to dwindle to a decorative design or remain a great architectural inspiration, rages.

The effect of the roof of the Monreale Cathedral being of wood, including the central portion where the dome should be, is to reduce the mosaics on the wall to the superficiality of a wall-paper. That effect is increased no doubt by the blaze of daylight which fills every part of the building, but it is the wooden roof which is decisive. The interior conveys the impression of a basilica. One place there is, and one alone, where the Byzantine theory is touched on, and that is in the eastern apse. The splendid curve of this great recess, with its blunt angles and the light changing to a rich mellow glow in its depths, gives a fine idea of the structural value of the material. It is the solitary Greek victory here. Everywhere else the word decorative is applicable. The veneer of gold on the flat wall-faces has evidently nothing to do with the structure which, by the pointed arcade below and the great beams above, is proclaimed to be of stone and wood. One glance from these to the apse reveals the whole difference, a difference, as was said of the Westminster chapels, not of degree but of principle. We should not think of applying the word decoration to the mosaic of the apse. There it is structural. It is employed architecturally.

The date of the Capella Palatina, the royal chapel forming part of the palace, is 1142. Here the Greeks

were rather more successful than at Monreale. That they should hold the apse is only what we should expect, because the apse, being a feature of far easier construction than domes and vaults, is naturally less contested ; but they have here also succeeded in annexing the dome, which they have turned into a fine specimen of their art, using with special effect those opportunities which the adjustment of the dome itself to its octagonal base, and of the octagon to the square of the choir arches gave them of exhibiting the pliability of their material. It is possible that a line or two quoted from a diary written on the spot will give the reader an impression of this effect :

“ It is worth noting,” I have jotted down, “ how well the arranging of these different shaped stories upon each other shows off their mosaic formation. First, on two sides, the octagon is made to overhang the square below ; its wall not projecting sharply but bulging outwards near two feet. The angles are spanned with deep, triple-arched recesses, hollowed inwards, rounded like caves, while at the top the octagon is bent and moulded to a round shape to receive the dome. These walls, with their sinuous curves and folds and wrinkles, that appear and fade away, and their rounded lumps and irregularities which seem to show, like clay, where the hands of the artist have pressed, give one the idea of having been kneaded bodily out of the rich substantial gold.”

All the east end of this church, then, is practically in Greek hands. Elsewhere they have not been so lucky. The vaulting of the nave and aisles is carried out in tedious repetitions of Arabic designs, in stonework for the nave and wood for the aisles. The results of this construction to the western portion of the church are fatal. The mosaics are here reduced to that merely decorative capacity which seems their inevitable fate in any but Greek hands. At the same time, as the result of the Byzantine architects having secured two out of the three disputed positions, this church has acquired a quite different character from the Monreale Cathedral. At Monreale the apse gave us a hint of the Byzantine meaning, but the influence was a purely local one. It did not extend to



the general architecture of the church. The acquisition of the dome has made all the difference in this respect. The effectiveness of this central feature, combined with the support of the eastern apse, has established the structural idea of mosaic. That idea, indeed, is not quite unchallenged. It is not quite universal. Nevertheless it is present as an architectural motive ; and it is, by two to one, the strongest architectural motive in the building.

We now come to the third and last of the Palermo churches still retaining their mosaics, the little Martorana Chapel, finished in 1143, the tiniest and yet, in character, the most interesting and the completest of all. It is no bigger than a large room, and its effect is much interfered with by later additions and enlargements. Nevertheless, the original interior, though now forming part of a larger building, remains much as it was, and affords a fair idea of that effect which the Greeks so steadily aimed at yet were so seldom permitted to achieve. Apses, dome, and vaults are wrought throughout in complete mosaic. No impeding structural element is permitted anywhere to appear, but the whole building down to the marble wainscoting is solidly wrought in unbroken gold. The addition in effect is decisive. What was a mere hint in the cathedral and a contested principle in the Palatina is admitted in the Martorana as the one authoritative law. The mosaic here is not used decoratively at all. It is used in the Greek sense, structurally. A critic who had noted the constant outside interference in the larger churches might very likely be inclined to attribute the tiny perfection of the Martorana to an individual Greek effort. And he would be right. The church was built at the expense of one George of Antioch, a wealthy and influential Greek, who was admiral of the Norman fleet. Its tiny proportions indicate the limits of a purely personal endeavour. Nevertheless the truth it was necessary to express has been expressed. The architectural motive, which has suffered so much from Norman indifference and the Puck-like interference of the Arab, was vindicated



at last ; and if the value of architecture is to be tested by the idea it embodies rather than the money and labour lavished on it, then the admiral's chapel may take its place among the significant buildings of the world.

Such is the testimony of these Sicilian churches. They bear witness to the fact that what the Greek theory aimed at was the structural use of mosaic. Wherever, in the churches we have named, that theory is departed from, in that place the work bears the impress of Norman or Arab influence. Wherever it is most perfectly carried out, there we find the Greeks exclusively in charge of the building. The struggle of this theory to assert itself appears like the struggle of order to emerge out of chaos. But at the same time, though the Sicilian churches have this interest, the interest that belongs to the vindication of a principle, they make no pretence at embodying the full power and effect of the Byzantine style. The Martorana, which, as we have seen, is the most complete specimen of the group, is on quite a tiny scale, and is, moreover, so altered by the enlargements that have been added to it that it has lost much of its own character and significance. We want something on a different scale from this effort of an individual to give us an adequate conception of Byzantine art.

Fortunately that something more exists. If throughout the West generally Byzantine art was misunderstood and thwarted, there was one spot at least where it was received with devoted submission. Venice was nurtured from her birth in a detestation of the West. This detestation, which the light of their own blazing homes had kindled in the breasts of the first settlers, which was intensified by subsequent relays of immigrants fleeing before the ravages of the Barbarians and was fostered by later events and acts of hostility with the mainland, may be faintly traced as a trait of the Venetian character down to the very fall of the Republic. But its effects were most apparent during the centuries when Europe was enveloped in semi-barbarism. Severed from Western

life, Venice turned her gaze eastward. Slowly, as her Eastern commerce grew, arose the thought of a civilisation, a wealth, a culture derived from that distant source. This Eastern trade was the "Enchanter's wand" which drew her many-coloured palace walls from the deep. Before the end of the eighth century the island city had become orientalised. The magnificence of Venetian life, the rich colours and textures of the dresses of her merchants, as well as the dignified composure and courtesy of their manners, are contrasted by contemporary historians with the coarse garments and uncouth manners of the Court of Charlemagne. There is something peculiarly striking in the dazzling apparition of a city so splendid and cultured in an age and among nations so rude and barbarous. Venice, in the Europe of the Middle Ages, has that appearance, familiar to us on certain dark and cloudy days, of some solitary feature in the landscape lit by the sun while the rest of the view is sunk in gloom.

Early in the ninth century Venice's attachment to Constantinople was signalised in the treaty which incorporated her in the Eastern Empire. During this and the following centuries the proofs of what Gibbon calls the "subjection" of the Venetians are, he says, "numerous and unquestionable, and the vain titles, the servile honours of the Byzantine Court, so ambitiously solicited by their dukes, would have degraded the magistrates of a free people." It is scarcely necessary to point out that a subjection which was purely nominal and entirely voluntary could carry with it no particular degradation. The action of Venice is interesting, not politically but merely as showing her own consciousness that she is herself a bit of the East rather than of the West, and as illustrating those feelings of reverential attachment which she cherished for the city which had been her foster-mother.

For this attachment, as it turned out, was to play a great part in the history of art. It was this which enabled Venice to supply the gifts that were wanting to an adequate expression of Eastern art, without impeding

or thwarting the East in its rendering of it. The collective national effort that goes to the creation of a great architecture did not, as I have said, exist in the Byzantine Empire. Where this quality did exist was among the younger nations and free communities of the West. Unfortunately for the Greeks these young nations were not inclined to yield themselves wholly to others' guidance. They had ideas of their own to express, in the value of which they were profound believers. A certain skill, scraps of a queer knowledge, they recognised in the Greek race, but they proposed to use that skill and knowledge in furtherance of their own ends. Hence arose that perpetual interference in Greek designs which we have caught a glimpse of among the churches of Sicily, and which was the rule throughout South Europe wherever the Byzantine style was introduced. The difficulty of getting those who had the practical power to carry out a big work to submit themselves to those who possessed the knowledge of how such a work should be carried out was apparently insuperable. The creation of Venice, however, solved the problem. A fragment of the West, rich in those virile qualifications which the East was deficient in, was detached, was forced into close connection with the Eastern Empire, adapted itself to Eastern civilisation, submitted to the teaching of Eastern art, and having, under these conditions, fulfilled its mission and laid its egg, was gradually reabsorbed into Western life again. The sole fruit of Venice's orientation surviving for us to-day is her unique achievement in Eastern art. And this achievement was made possible, not by any artistic genius of her own, but simply by the immense love and regard she had for the East which induced her to place all her resources of wealth, strength, and concentrated purpose quite humbly and unreservedly at the disposal of Byzantine artists.

The general aspect of St. Mark's is too familiar to most readers to need detailed description, nor could such description be attempted here. It will be enough to

draw attention to the vindication of that principle which, as I have endeavoured to show, is the clue to Byzantine art. The mosaics of St. Mark's do not, as is often said by Western critics, "adorn" the church: they compose it. They are used never decoratively but structurally throughout. The three characteristic Byzantine features are here made use of with great completeness and effect, and domes, vaults, and apses combine to display the richness and softness of the material. The whole of the upper portion of the building is composed of curves. There is not a flat expanse, nor a sharp edge, nor a correct right angle in the whole of it. The edges are blunt and heavily turned, the angles filled in and rounded, the surfaces uneven and slightly undulating. Vaults and cavernous recesses melt into each other. Nowhere is the material broken. Whether it protrudes in prominent folds or opens upward into the great concaves of the domes, full of soft, yellow light, or sinks into darkness in shadowy tunnels, or burns a steady flame, in the final curve of the broad eastern apse, it forms but one mass of rich auriferous paste throughout. That appearance we noted in the Palatina, of curves and folds conveying the idea of the manipulation of a soft material, is here carried out with far greater completeness and on an immense scale, and greatly heightens the impression we receive of an interior substantially composed of gold.

Once we fully receive that impression we hold the clue to the architecture. If we compare these domes, as a domical system, with the domes of Santa Sophia, we confess their inferiority. But if we consider them as a manifestation of mosaic, how immeasurably superior are they in their lowness, depth, and volume to the airy structure of the Constantinople church. Santa Sophia is an elaboration of the dome theory as an architectural motive. St. Mark's is something quite different. It is the elaboration of the mosaic theory as an architectural motive. In the former case the domed arrangement owes none of its real power to the mosaics, which are of a

purely decorative character, and might give place, without much harm done, to some other form of decorative treatment. It owes its power entirely to its structural merits. But strip St. Mark's of its mosaics, and its very architectural existence is at an end. Those squat domes and gloomy vaults make no sort of claim to structural beauty. Indeed, they scarcely strike one as structural at all. So ponderous, dim, and ill-fashioned are they that they appear to be a work of excavation rather than of architecture. They might have been dug out with a spade.

No! the sole beauty that pertains to the domes and vaults of St. Mark's is derived from the substance in which they are wrought. They are not beautiful in themselves. They are not there for any merits of their own. They are beautiful because they suit the mosaic. They are there because they have been chosen by the mosaic as its own fitting vehicle. It is not they that make use of the mosaic; it is the mosaic that makes use of them. I harp on this point and I hope the reader will forgive me, but the fact is, it is the crux of the whole matter. In the West, where architecture is entirely a matter of form, vaults are vaults and domes are domes. They have their own structural value and no other. We shall never understand Byzantine art as long as we stick to that point of view, for it is of the essence of the Byzantine style that these forms are entirely to give up this structural value of theirs in order to serve the purposes of the new building material. And it is this assumption by the new material of absolute control over the architectural features of the building which marks it as the inspiration of a distinct architectural style.

Throughout St. Mark's, then, we have mosaic used as an architectural motive, and we find it everywhere dictating and insisting on those kinds of forms and surfaces which best display its own plastic and soft nature. This idea is carried out with wonderful consistency and courage, but this alone would not of course explain the attraction of the style. Putty is a plastic material, and probably



an architecture of putty would in its main forms very much resemble an architecture of mosaic. Yet it might not be beautiful. Mosaic, however, is something more than a plastic material. It is also a colour material. If we would realise with what purpose in view the Greeks abandoned the fascinating idea of domed construction, and what thought the Sicilian architects strove so pertinaciously to realise in the Palermo churches, we must unite these ideas of softness and colour, and say that in making a soft substance like mosaic the architectural motive of the new style, and giving it control over every part of the structure, the Greeks were really making colour the architectural motive and giving colour control over all the structure.

Further, to appreciate the opportunities that were opened to the Byzantine architects, we must recognise that between these ideas of colour and softness there is something more than an accidental connection. There is a natural connection, in the sense that though a substance may be soft without being a beautiful colour it cannot be fitted for the perfect display of colour unless it is soft. Softness and colour go together as naturally as hardness and form. Between colour and form there is, as I began by pointing out, a certain incompatibility. Colour is sensuous and indefinable. Form is intellectual and essentially definable. Any object as it approaches exact definition confirms its hold upon our intellectual feeling for form, but loses some of its hold upon our sensuous feeling for colour. The reader will know that, among painters, the few great colourists we have had always act on this knowledge. Colour, with them, assumes a certain dominion over form, and, in the spread of its own suffusing glow and richness, melts down and to some extent obliterates form, just as the great undulations of mosaic in St. Mark's melt down and obliterate the structural features of the old formal styles. Wherever colour is applied to exact forms it is necessarily limited and governed by such forms, and is used, in fact, as an

accessory of form. This is that "decorative" use of it on which critics blandly insist in regard to mosaic, and which is, indeed, the only use of it which the West commonly apprehends. But no matter how rich in colour it may be, a defined form, so long as it retains the severity of its definition—so long, that is, as it appeals directly to our intellectual appreciation—never can give more than the decorative interpretation of colour. It cannot give its sensuous interpretation. To its sensuous interpretation there must of necessity belong that indefiniteness which is an emotional condition in harmony with the sensuous influence of colour. Those who have felt the power of St. Mark's will probably agree in this. They will feel that it would be impossible to conceive an exact and sharply defined scheme of colour which should produce upon the senses the effect of the gorgeous twilight and misty crimsons and azures of this interior.

The advantages, then, of the softness of mosaic as a colour material are evident. Hitherto hard building material, such as marble or stone, had dictated architectures of form, which, in their turn, had involved a purely decorative use of colour. The introduction of a soft substance as at once a building material and a colour material placed colour on a new footing. It enabled it to escape from the thralldom of form and to develop its own sensuous rather than decorative character. And, in effect, if we glance back at the Palermo examples we shall find that only where the mosaic is used structurally is the sensuous effect of colour felt. It is felt in the fold of the Monreale apse, in the glowing recesses of the eastern part of the Palatina, and more completely in the drooping vaults of the little Martorana chapel. On the other hand, wherever the mosaic is used superficially and in conjunction with structural forms, there colour is limited to its purely decorative function. In short, the deepening hold and power which the colour of these interiors gains over the mind and consciousness of the spectator is but the exact measure and reflection which the mosaic obtains

over the structural composition of the building. These examples might be added to by scores. At Rome, at Ravenna, at Athens, at Constantinople, and throughout the Near East there are scattered buildings in which the struggle of colour to free itself from the control of form and the efforts of form to maintain its hold upon colour are illustrated. The result of these contests is always the same. Wherever form is introduced structurally it kills the sensuous appeal of colour, and wherever colour is introduced structurally it kills the intellectual appeal of form.

At the same time these conditions certainly do not preclude the use of form where colour is the main object. They only limit and define that use. The limitation, of course, turns on the word structural. Just as colour does not make its sensuous appeal until it becomes structural, so neither does form make its intellectual appeal until it, too, becomes structural. Short of that, both are decorative and may be so used. There could be no better example of the right use of these effects than the Greeks have left us in their Doric and Byzantine styles—the one a perfect manifestation of the idea of form, employing colour decoratively (that is to say, to individualise and define the shape of mouldings and other features) and shorn of its sensuous effect; the other a perfect manifestation of colour employing form decoratively (that is, in very slight string-courses or inlaid strips of carving of no structural value) and shorn of its intellectual appeal.

As the reader will by this time perceive, I base my interpretation of the Byzantine style of architecture on the fact of the existence in the world of two entirely different conceptions of the use of colour. I said just now that it was in proportion as the mosaic assumed control of the building, and began to mould and fashion the features and proportions of it, that its colour influence began to assume the same sort of control over the onlooker's mind. It was then this influence of colour

It began to change its nature from something superficial, decorative, and belonging to the eye to something profound and interior and belonging to the mind. In a word, instead of lying upon the surface of life it began to sink into the texture of life. That is a difference which any acute observer will notice in the effect of flat superficial mosaic and mosaic used in the formation of apses and domes. But this is exactly the difference between the Eastern and Western use of colour. Colour in the West does not enter into life. No word, we know, is oftener used to describe the lives of English peasants and artisans than the word *colourless*. Here, among our foundations and in the raw material, so to speak, of our national life, colour has no existence. Among those, perhaps, who have something to spend on adornments it makes a feeble appearance; but in that case it comes, not as a part of life, but as a decoration of life, a something added. All the defects of Western colouring, its timidity and weakness, its violence and vulgarity, arise from the fact that colour does not really form a part of Western life; that it is not with us a natural element but a thing acquired, put on, experimentalised in; a taste, perhaps, but not a sense.

On the other hand, with Orientals the exact reverse is the case. Colour is of the essence of their lives. Instead of being weakest where life is at its simplest and most primitive, it is just there that it is richest and strongest. The gypsy I spoke of, dark-eyed and swarthy-skinned, camping on the common edge, is himself a bit of colour, and the scarlet or yellow handkerchief knotted about his throat is the mere unconscious selection of like by like. The reader who dwells on this distinction, who contrasts the living, breathing colour suggestion of the gypsy with the utter colourlessness of English peasant life, will be the better able to form a conception of the depth and genuineness of the inspiration that underlay Byzantine art. A use of colour, superficial and acquired, will fall naturally under the dominion of more powerful interests, and it was inevitable that colour, as employed in the West,

should become the mere accessory and helpless parasite of form. But as understood by the East, it had an independent existence and was susceptible, therefore, of independent development. This was the task which the Byzantine architects undertook, and which, by the help of a material which could render colour without form, they finally accomplished.

And in accomplishing this task they set upon their work the unmistakable seal of Greek genius. It is not too much to say that the inward resemblance between St. Mark's and a Doric temple is as strong as their outward differences are salient. Both display the same singleness of purpose in making use of every means to develop and heighten the artistic effect they have in view. Both reject with the same confidence every means, however tempting, however popular, however prescribed by custom, which does not harmonise with that main artistic effect and help to develop it. Both march with the same splendid composure through all the allurements of detail to the final judgment of the whole. If simplicity consists, as I am very sure it does, not so much in plainness of result as in singleness of purpose, then St. Mark's may share with the temple its claim to supreme simplicity. The cathedral is a single, unalloyed sensation, as truly as the temple is a single, unalloyed intellectual conception. True, instead of clean-cut proportions, exquisitely shaped and finished, here are soft, melting forms almost indeterminable. Yet the breadth of touch here is equal to the boldness of line there. These great shadows that gather, darkening or smouldering, and spread in dim yet rich obscurity through the building, these huge curves and hollows of ruddy or gleaming gold, these massive piers encased in their dusky marble slabs, are the means, just as carefully thought out and just as carefully adjusted to the impression they are designed to convey as the sharp-cut architraves and columns are adjusted to the design of the temple.

Nothing in the history of art is more extraordinary than the influence of this single structure, an influence,



too, wielded largely in despite of the will even of those who underwent it. No building we know of has been so much misunderstood and so often reviled as St. Mark's. Yet men have felt truer than they have reasoned. Her power has asserted itself, and to-day the results of her influence among us, veiled though they may be, are immense, are incalculable. A very large share of all that Europe knows of colour Venice has taught her, and St. Mark's is the centre and heart of Venice's colour inspiration. No one who turns from the glow within the basilica to the glow on the canvases of the great Venetian painters can fail to perceive whence that rich suffusion of colour, with its power, unique among the Italian schools, for melting down the obstructions of form, was derived. Others have drunk at the same spring. One master pre-eminently among the Netherlanders has that glow—Rubens, and he learnt it in Venice. One pre-eminently among English painters has it—Reynolds, and he learnt it in Venice.

Thus, by channels too numerous to trace, acting primarily on the art that grew up under its immediate sway, and secondarily, through that, on the art and artists of other nations, the influence of the great Greek embodiment of the Eastern ideal has filtered and penetrated through Europe, until now, perhaps, if we stood in any of our galleries and were able to obliterate at a stroke all that St. Mark's had contributed, it would be as if a cloud had passed over the sun. Between East and West Venice has been the chief interpreter, and St. Mark's has prompted Venice.

Finally, let me remind the reader that the creative effort in art which we call the Byzantine style must be joined in our imagination to its predisposing cause: that is to say, it must be joined to that great movement of mind which brought Eastern thought Westward and introduced a spirit of emotional mysticism into regions hitherto guided by purely intellectual conceptions. It was the Greeks who, when their own intellectual solution of life

failed, were drawn into communion with the East, and were the means and channels whereby the ideas of the East were received into Europe. It was they who grouped these ideas into a philosophical system and gave them for the first time something approaching a coherent utterance. And what they did for Eastern ideas in the realm of thought they did also in the realm of art. They gave them coherent expression. Byzantine art is merely Eastern thought or Eastern spiritual emotion, expressing itself through and by means of the Greek genius. All the characteristics of the architecture we have been discussing, its stern rejection of the exactitude of structural forms, its instinctive aversion to the intellectual point of view, its reliance for effect on the aid of colour working under the control of chiaroscuro, which we have noted as of the emotional order—all these characteristics are characteristics of the Eastern temperament and the Eastern soul. They are characteristics which belong to all that is deepest in the history of the East. Whoever would imbibe Eastern thought, whoever would share the speculations and the emotions of Eastern mystics will feel that all he is in search of inhabits the interior of St. Mark's. The very sense of an enhanced spiritual consciousness which is the aim of the whole Eastern philosophy seems to pervade that interior. The architecture is a mood of the mind made visible. Two eminent French critics, in their work on *L'Art byzantine*, have defined that mood, and have expressed in a sentence the emotion which the soul of the onlooker feels beneath these domes: "Un calme contemplatif en descend vers elle, une sérénité douce, mystique, familière à l'Orient."

## CHAPTER V

### INDIAN THOUGHT AND INDIAN ART

The fate of sculpture in Indian hands, and the tricks which mysticism plays with the quality of form.

"UNDOUBTEDLY," Mr. Havell begins his book upon *Indian Ideals*, "the most significant fact in modern Western art is that artists, dimly conscious of the limitations which the narrow conventions of the Italian Renaissance have so long imposed upon them, have been looking for many years once more to the East for new ideas and new sources of inspiration." This looking to the East may be a significant fact as regards Western artists, but its significance does not stop there. If we are drawing near the East in art it is because we are drawing near to her in thought and feeling. We are, in fact, living in one of those most interesting yet always mysterious epochs, full of mental and spiritual change and growth, when the minds of East and West are acting upon each other. Such epochs may well be called mysterious, for though our own contribution to the exchange is for the most part communicated in very intelligible terms—railways and battleships and bridges and dams and all the paraphernalia of Western progress being factors which readily submit themselves to analysis—yet with the more spiritual East it is different. It is harder to trace the routes by which that influence travels and the lines of communication it has established. Its motion is liquid, and while Western ideas, borne by conquering armies

and dominant races, burst themselves a palpable breach in Oriental philosophy, the ideas of the East soak so quietly Westward that we find ourselves accepting and assimilating them without knowing what we are doing or observing the origin of thoughts which seem already familiar.

It always has been so. What revolution of the human mind has been more important or involved larger consequences than the breakdown of classicalism following on the contact established with the East during the last three centuries of the pagan era? The resemblance between that era and the present is in many ways striking. During those centuries the classic intellect was transformed. Its serene self-confidence and self-sufficiency were drained out of it. Its pretensions to explain the universe, or to confine men's attention to as much of it as it could explain, were exploded. Another human sense seems in the interval to have developed, and in all kinds of mental activity we distinguish the operations of that inward, contemplative, and spiritual faculty, the cultivation of which has ever been the one preoccupation of the East, and the assaults of which the classic mind seemed trained and organised to withstand. The classic mind in this interval is strangely metamorphosed, but how and by what means? The walls crumble, but who deals the blows? The machinery of communication, the Alexandrine conquests, and Greek settlements in the Near East exist, but they have the air of a wireless telegraphy installation trafficking in the invisible. Who are the missionaries and heralds of the new philosophy? What are its doctrines? Where is its literature?

There is little to be said in answer. It makes its way imperceptibly, and, like a thaw in the night, is more visible in its effects than in itself. That men's minds were changed to the point of accepting a spiritual creed which to the classic intelligence would have seemed lunacy is obvious enough, but the means by which the change was wrought remain obscure.

So now ; the transformation that has come over the Western mind in the last quarter of a century is palpable even to the unobservant ; not only are our mediums and mystics and spiritualists of one sort and another, the experts of the new learning, more confident in their claims and vigorous in their researches than ever before, but our very professors and men of science dabble in transcendentalism and suspect the interference of spirit in the strongholds of materialism. For each one of us the partitions which separate the seen from the unseen, the natural from the supernatural have crumbled and given way. There has come upon us an access of spiritual consciousness, and the universe is suffused with corresponding suggestions and possibilities. The old invisible traffic has set in. The flowing from West to East of material conceptions is balanced by a flowing from East to West of spiritual conceptions. We are learning to be mystical as fast as the East is learning to be practical, though how we are learning we could none of us, perhaps, say. That the soul is the divining or seeing faculty, that truth is attained not through the operations of the intellect but by the soul's inward act of passive contemplation, that matter and mind are twin illusions and spiritual consciousness the only real consciousness—these and the like thoughts native to the East are receiving to-day the same kind of popular attention which thirty years ago was accorded to the certitudes of science.

This is that sympathy in thought which underlies and has prompted the sympathy in art which Mr. Havell refers to. All our chief art critics, Mr. Berenson, Mr. Binyon, Mr. Fry, and others, have of late been insisting that European art is suffering from a too exclusive development of its scientific capacity. The Renaissance itself, so exclusively, so one-sidedly intellectual, was from the first primarily concerned with the problems of correct representation ; and modelling, anatomy, foreshortening, and the laws of perspective were the subjects which engaged the attention of each generation of artists. So



much is this the case that a sustained progressive movement in this department from Giotto to Raphael indicates quite unmistakably the nature of the ideal at which Renaissance art was aiming. Scientific excellence was its object, and it achieved it. But in achieving it, it exhausted it, and we ourselves are reaping the consequences of that exhaustion. We are discovering that scientific knowledge and executive skill, pursued as an end in themselves, reveal in the long run only their own nothingness. What our art lacks, it seems, is depth of thought and emotion, an inspiration of the spirit. That there is some truth in this line of criticism many who are not art critics would agree. They know it from their experience of life if not from their experience of art. Life, they find, has been falling into precisely the same error that art has been falling into, the error of proposing intellectual efficiency as a final solution, and it needs to cure it the same remedy, an infusion of spiritual ideas. Mr. Berenson finds the inspiration in Chinese art, Mr. Binyon in Japanese art, and both may be right, for, as Mr. Okakura insists, the art philosophy of all the East is of the same complexion.

But if Mr. Berenson and Mr. Binyon are right, how much more right must Mr. Havell be! What holds good of Chinese and Japanese art holds still more good of Indian art. China and Japan do but dally with India's great spiritual idea, which is diluted and weakened in its transfer to those remote regions until it affords but a doubtful and uncertain inspiration. If we would discover the spiritual motive in its freshness and power as a life force we must go to India; and consequently, if we would discover the same motive in full vigour as an artistic force we must have recourse to Indian art. A resident for many years in India, Principal of the Government School of Art and Keeper of the Calcutta Art Gallery, Mr. Havell approaches his subject with a complete experience of all its aspects. With a contemptuous gesture he seems to brush aside as amateurish irrelevancies the arguments in favour of Chinese or Japanese spiritual art, and in

authoritative accents bids us prostrate ourselves before the creations of the Hindu genius.

That we experience a shock on first seeing them is undeniable; that the dozen arms or legs which signify divine might, and the extra eye which denotes omniscience are apt to puzzle and confound a Western observer is only to be expected. But for this instinctive repugnance Mr. Havell is prepared. Indian art being purely spiritual cannot, he points out, be judged by Western standards, which are based on merely material considerations. There is but one key to it. It must be approached in the order of its creation. First, that is to say, we must immerse ourselves in Indian thought, and then we shall be able to accept Indian art as the proper and perfect embodiment of that thought. All that stands in our way is our ingrained materialism. The spiritual having dried up in Western life has dried up in Western art. But Indian life reeks of the spiritual, is saturated with it. What should its art be but be saturated with it also? That it seems otherwise to us is, as Mr. Havell triumphantly points out, but a proof of our entire subjection to our scientific code.

I will endeavour in a minute to follow Mr. Havell's advice and approach Indian art through Indian thought, but before doing so it is worth pointing out that, even if we acknowledge the insufficiency of the scientific code as an end, there is something to be said for it as a beginning. The scientific code is concerned with the laws of form, and the question to be asked is whether the artist who undertakes to convey any kind of ideas whatsoever through the medium of form is not thereby bound to respect the laws of form? Mr. Havell asserts the negative. "It is difficult," he exclaims, "to argue with those who are so steeped in Western academic prejudices" as to object to the use of "a third eye to denote spiritual consciousness," or "a multiplicity of arms to denote the universal attributes of divinity." His own contention is that such vagaries are not only pardonable but laudable. It is the

triumph of Indian art that it rises superior to natural law, and that its multi-limbed figures do indeed express and embody the more than human energy and might which they were designed to embody.

It is here, it seems, that the scientific code has a word to say. It is a law derived from universal experience that every medium, whatever effects it may be used to produce, must, in order to produce those effects, be used in accordance with its own nature. The musician must use his violin in accordance with the nature of violins. The gardener must use his spade in accordance with the nature of spades. In such a way, too, must the mason use his stone, the carpenter his wood, the potter his clay. The thing used, indeed, can only be used after this manner. Thus, too, the sculptor who uses form to convey his meaning is, in the interests of that meaning itself, bound to observe the laws of form. What happens if he does not? Dissatisfied with the expressive capacity of the body as it exists, it occurs to him to increase that capacity by the addition of extra arms and legs. But that human form expresses most energy which calls into most vigorous play the whole organic system of the body. It is not a question of one limb or another but of the agreement of the entire organism in a single act, an act which expresses itself vividly because it unites body, limbs, hands, feet, pose, and gestures, all working together through the body's physical anatomy, in the bond of a common purpose. But how, if limbs are multiplied, that is, if physical anatomy is outraged, can this agreement continue to exist? The pages of Mr. Havell's book abound in figures with six or eight arms and as many legs stuck on at random in all sorts of positions. No muscular system supports and confirms their random gestures. The physical machinery which can put them in motion is not there. How can they be expressive as forms when they do not utilise the means by which forms achieve expression? It is all very well to be told that to stipulate for the usual number of arms and legs is to be sunk in

Western prejudice, but from the point of view, not of the users of forms, Western or Eastern at all, but of the forms themselves, there seems something to be said for the practice.

It is possible that to many readers this will seem obvious, but I am anxious to dwell for a moment on the issue in order to accentuate the difference it discloses between the Eastern and Western points of view. The human body, as Mr. Havell points out, has always been accepted by Western art as the highest medium of expression. Why? Man's body being a material composition of flesh and blood, controlled by a nervous and muscular mechanism, exactly as the bodies of other animals are, in what does its superior significance consist? It consists in the quality of the ideas and emotions of which it is the conductor. Living bodies are put in motion by living impulses of mind and character, and express those impulses in their own gestures and attitudes. Hence the value of a body as an artistic vehicle depends in great measure on the order of impulses which move it and which it can interpret. The impulses which move animal bodies are of a comparatively low order. Swiftmess, strength, activity, ferocity are the merely physical ideas best represented by the forms of animals; whereas fortitude, sobriety, nobility of soul, and even spiritual sweetness and lucidity, since they all tend to mould the motions of the form and the expression of the face, may find expression in terms of the human body. Hence, as I say, the immense superiority of the latter as an artistic vehicle.

But while noticing the difference between the two, let the similarity between them also be kept in view. While the difference between animal and human forms consists in the differing value of the ideas and emotions they incarnate, the similarity between them consists in the methods and processes by which such ideas are conveyed. The ferocity which prompts the wild boar to hurl itself on its enemy is expressed through the nerves and muscles



of the body. But so, too, the spiritual fervour which lifts the eyes and hands of a saint to heaven is also expressed through the nerves and muscles of the body. The fact that a transition has been made from a comparatively degraded physical impulse to an exalted spiritual impulse in no way emancipates the sculptor from obedience to natural law. Why should it? Precisely the same physical machinery which translates animal impulses translates human ones, nor has the body any other way of translating. It can speak thus and thus only. So that whatever be the meaning the sculptor has to convey, it must still be by aid and right use of the physical machinery that he must convey it. His ideas may be what they will, but the fact that he has undertaken to express them in terms of the human body obliges him to respect the laws of the human body, and failing to do this he turns his own chosen vehicle of expression into gibberish.

In the attempt to show that spiritual conceptions are entitled to ignore material laws Mr. Havell draws a parallel between Indian and mediaeval art, but it is just this comparison, as it seems to me, which best illustrates the difference between the Eastern and Western standpoints. We may say what we like about the sculpture of Amiens or Bourges, but we shall never alter the fact about it that it is primitive or incomplete, and incomplete because of the insufficiency of its knowledge of expression; because, that is to say, it has not achieved such a mastery of the science of art as will admit of its conveying its spiritual meaning with the power that meaning justifies.

But even as it is the fascination of mediaeval sculpture consists largely in the reverence with which it manipulates its vehicle. Mediaeval sculptors may not know much about anatomy and proportion, but they are perfectly humble in their ignorance. They articulate with a naïve and wistful carefulness. They are sorry they know so little of the language, for if they knew it better they could utter their meaning more fully, but at any rate nothing that patience and study and devout pains can



achieve shall be lacking. It is impossible to conceive artists more filled with respect for nature and natural law than they are, and it is in this that the fundamental difference which separates them from the Orientalists consists. The opposition in point of view is complete. The Western instinct of reverence for the artist's medium, for the material that is, is not of scientific origin. The scientific centuries developed this instinct, and perhaps in doing so have tended to restrict attention to its exercise, but it has always been inherent in Western art. Not until we turn to the East are we confronted by the opposite, and to us astonishing theory, that natural laws may be violated at will, and that, having accepted a given vehicle, the artist, under pretence of making it express his own thought more completely, is entitled to outrage the very principles which enable it to express anything at all.

But if we hesitate to accept Mr. Havell's estimate of Indian art, what explanation have we on our side to offer of its singularities? Indian art exhibits an indifference amounting to absolute contempt for Nature and her laws. Any one in India can ride roughshod over Nature and break her ordinances at his pleasure. How is this to be explained? How is it that a race, in many respects sensitively and profoundly intelligent, should have contrived to miss altogether the significance of natural law and design? The idea we have been discussing, the idea that power is increased by a multiplicity of limbs, strikes one at first glance as so essentially stupid that it seems incompatible with any kind of mental development. One can understand savages arguing that eight arms are more expressive than two, but for people to reason thus who had learnt to observe and reflect would seem to be out of the question. In this perplexity let us remember Mr. Havell's hint that Indian art is the expression of Indian thought, and that we must, if we would appreciate the art, approach it through the thought. Mr. Havell takes it for granted that, if once he can get us to do this, we shall be so struck by the pure and abstract quality of Indian

spiritual ideas that we shall be as ready as he is to accept their guarantee for the art. One may, however, be quite prepared to acknowledge the beauty of Hindu philosophy, yet not be able to help noticing in that philosophy a doctrine which, though ignored by Mr. Havell, seems to have influenced Indian art not inconsiderably.

I have already drawn attention to the character of Eastern thought, but I would emphasise one of its aspects over again. Hindu ideas gather round two main tenets. The first is the great positive doctrine of the school, that spiritual existence, the existence of the soul or *atman*, is the only real existence, and the soul itself the only existing medium of enlightenment. The second, which is the natural corollary to the first, is that the material universe is an illusion of the senses, having no existence outside the senses. The recognition of the latter truth is, as the reader will see, essential to the realisation of the former. Enlightenment, according to the Hindu theory, is achieved when the soul, recognising the non-existence of the earthly sphere, steps through the limit of time and space into the presence of the infinite. That is to say, salvation depends on the completeness with which the pilgrim of the mystic way is able to realise the unreality of matter. The value to the world of Hinduism's first tenet is, I suppose, beyond computation. It is perhaps not too much to say that its ideal of spiritual consciousness and direct spiritual vision has been the motive power of all the great waves of faith which have overspread the world. It has not supplied the thing to be believed, but it has supplied the power of believing it. Its influence is explained by its vindication of the spiritual faculty in man. The soul, so it teaches, is that which knows, that which sees. It is the organ through which knowledge flows in upon a man. Here is a sure basis provided for the spiritual life. As all thinkers have divined, the character of the knowledge we are able to assimilate must depend on the character of our own assimilative faculties. Western progress has proceeded on intellectual lines, and has

developed the intellectual faculty in man. It has indeed done so to such an extent and has taught us to seek enlightenment so exclusively from intellectual sources that, even when the matter in hand does not come under intellect's survey at all, we have recourse to that faculty, and, groping in spiritual darkness, appeal to intellect to deliver us from the doubt into which it has itself cast us. More logically Indian philosophy turns to another faculty, another source of knowledge. Intellect can never help us on the spiritual plane, for it is pledged to those finite and temporal conditions amongst which it has its being. But the soul, the spiritual eye in us, being itself of spiritual essence can really apprehend spiritual ideas. To that faculty the Indian appeals. Our arguments and reasonings and disputes on faith, on the miraculous, on the absolute—the writhings and twistings of the mind that would fain wring out of the finite an estimate of the infinite—possess for him the same degree of significance as the chattering of monkeys in trees. With a smile of unparalleled scorn, he sweeps into oblivion and nonentity both the visible universe and the powers of the mind which subsist upon it, and in the silence and the void he has created he waits for the soul within him to open its eye and see.

In what are called the ages of faith, ages when faith attains the certainty of direct vision and the act of contemplation is in itself a sufficient source of beatitude, the influence of Eastern thought is always apparent. It is more difficult to grasp the conception of matter which a relentless concentration on spiritual insight involved. There are illusions which are harmless and illusions which are deadly. The illusion of material reality is, in Hindu thought, deadly, for it cuts the soul off from the recognition of its spiritual identity. Not death itself can set it free. So long as matter has dominion over it it must go on in a perpetual cycle of reincarnations, the dupe of the senses and entangled in the meshes of outward appearance, until by an act of insight of its own it detects the imposture

to which it is subject. A belief therefore in material reality is in Hindu thought the main obstacle to enlightenment. Do not let the reader imagine that there is any similarity between the mysticism which accepts the material universe as an interpretation, or incarnation, of spiritual being, and the mysticism which conceives of matter as a barrier between man and spiritual being. The first view ennobles Nature, the latter degrades her. The first is Western mysticism, the latter Eastern.

It is here we have our hands on a clue calculated to arrest the attention of any one interested in Indian art. Indian art, we said, exhibits an entire contempt of matter. Indian thought, we now find, inculcates contempt of matter as a condition of salvation. Indian art treats Nature's laws as non-existent. Indian thought treats Nature herself as non-existent. If we desired effectually to sterilise art what more infallible means could we adopt than to propagate the theory of the non-existence of matter? Such a theory, in so far as it was accepted, must tend to dry up the stream of art at its very source. It is a far more fatal attack than any attack on art itself could possibly be, for it is an attack on the very substance in which art works. It is as though a sculptor should find his marble turning to mist and vapour under the strokes of his chisel. It may be objected that, after all, a theory is only a theory, and that it is scarcely to be expected that an abstract philosophy should dictate the attitude of a whole race of people towards a subject so humanly natural as art. The objection will be disposed of if we realise the hold which this doctrine had obtained over the Indian mind. "Nothing really exists"—so Sir Monier Williams in his well-known work on Hinduism describes what he calls its root-dogma—"but the one Universal Spirit called Brahman, and whatever appears to exist separately from that spirit is mere illusion." And he adds, "This is the uncompromising creed of true Brahmanism. This, according to the orthodox Hindu philosophy, is the only true Veda. This, at least according to the belief of the



generality of educated Hindus, is the only true knowledge to which the Veda leads." We often speak of the gulf which separates East from West, but in what does it consist? The West has assiduously fostered the cult of appearances, the knowledge and investigation of Nature. It has come to rely, perhaps overmuch, on science and material phenomena, and to employ, almost too confidently and too exclusively, the intellectual and rational faculties which feed upon such subject-matter. It may be, as our art critics tell us, that we have, in consequence of this material bias of ours, lost the capacity for dealing with spiritual ideas. But if this is true of us still more certain is it that the East, in its concentration on spiritual thought, has lost all capacity for dealing effectively with material facts. The East has long preached that the only means of divining the truth is by an act of purely spiritual vision, and it is the case that the only truths which India has ever made progress in have been truths of this order—truths, that is to say, spiritual in their own essence and handled by the soul, not truths of the material order handled by the intellect. The search for truth which carries Englishmen into libraries or laboratories or the lecture-rooms of professors carries the Indian into the shades of forests, where, without let or hindrance, he may yield his whole consciousness to the act of spiritual contemplation. Here lies the gap that separates East from West. It is a difference, not so much in opinion or point of view, as in the faculties employed to acquire knowledge. If, of two races, one had to rely for information on the sense of sight and the other on the sense of touch they might vary in their ideas in the same fundamental way that East and West vary.

Indeed, what we have called the Hindu philosophy is more than a philosophy; it is a racial tendency and profound mental bias, and its dominating influence is, as has been already pointed out, written across the whole page of Indian history. For there is this that is sinister about the Eastern contemplative philosophy, that it cuts



away the ground from under the feet of all natural knowledge of whatever kind. India's only teachers, her only professors are those solitary dreamers who, remote from books and all the paraphernalia of research, commune with the infinite in their own souls. India has built up no edifice of mundane knowledge and appears in all ages to have been totally regardless of all merely intellectual achievement. She is not interested in the world we live in, and knows little or nothing about its anatomy and its laws. She is not interested in man, and knows little or nothing about his history and exploits. How is so strange an indifference to be explained, and why is it that a race of people of keen and subtle intelligence should have remained inaccessible to all the appeals which nature makes to reason ?

We have already answered the question. All forms of mundane knowledge are identical with art in this respect, that they deal with the visible universe as their material. Hence any accepted doctrine of faith which degraded or invalidated that material would deal the same deadly blow at all forms of mundane knowledge as it deals at art. India, in short, has never made anything of either art or mundane knowledge because Indian philosophy from the first has met the claims of Nature with a flat negative. The first Indian seers who started the race on a spiritual career, of which the denial of material existence was an essential condition, laid the axe to the root of all art as well as all secular science of whatsoever kind.

If now we go on to examine a little more closely into certain changes in Indian life and thought which have attended similar changes in art, we shall discover added proof of the connection indicated. The only Indian art which displays the slightest respect for the forms it uses is the art of the Buddhist period. This art is called naturalistic, and it was so, no doubt, at least to the extent that it observes Nature, if not with knowledge, at any rate with curiosity and affection. But the India which thus

regarded Nature was far from being the India which had originated and maintained the Hindu tenet of the non-existence of matter. Sternly consistent, Hinduism had combated from the first art's dangerous tendency to glorify the material sphere. Mr. Havell thinks it wonderful that there should exist scarcely a trace of art of the early Hindu centuries. The spiritual idea was then at its purest, why was there no art to correspond? Precisely, we answer, because the idea *was* at its purest, and being so was able to include the sacrifice of art in its scheme of asceticism. Was the materialism which thought had banned to be beautified and given fresh hold over men's affections through the machinations of art? It was not Hindu India that wavered on such an issue, but an India penetrated and suffused by the cult of Buddhism, and Buddhism, as the reader knows, differs from Hinduism in the more mundane and human sentiment with which it is charged; in its assiduous preaching of the more humane virtues—pity, mercy, charity, sympathy—extended even to the animal kingdom; in its recognition, in short, of the existence and the manifold claims of this temporal earthly sphere. The pity that inflamed the heart of the Buddha was a pity for the hapless multitude whom the abstract contemplative doctrines of Hinduism could not adequately comfort or enlighten. His gospel was a gospel of earthly duties, of neighbourly and brotherly love, the immediate and inevitable tendency of which was to transform the universe from illusion into reality. The change, from the point of view of art, was vital. It gave art a footing in the natural and the visible. It legitimatised her material and removed the veto under which she had hitherto lain. The period during which this emancipation lasted is India's artistic period. It is the only period in the country's history in which matter, art's material, is treated with the least knowledge of its nature, of the laws which govern it, and of the possibilities of expression latent in it.

How deep did the change go? As deep as Buddhism

itself went into Indian life. To say that Buddhism at any time supplanted or even transformed Hinduism would be misleading. It was partial in its influence and it was limited in its duration. Without breaking with the older faith it aspired to correct its abstract character by infusions of earthly and human sentiment. It was, in strong contrast to Hindu philosophy, a religion of humanity. Now, if we were to take the period during which this religion of humanity was in the ascendant, we should find that, as nearly as such events can be dated, it tallies with the great naturalistic epoch in Indian art. Buddhism, after a period of probation and struggle, was adopted as the state religion in the reign of Asoka the Great in the third century B.C. It is from the same reign that Indian art dates its first decisive creative epoch. Buddhism again underwent a long period of decline, from, perhaps, the fifth century A.D. till its final extinction in the eighth century. Indian art shows during those centuries an increasing tendency to abandon the naturalistic standpoint, until, with the re-establishment of the older faith, it relinquishes it altogether in favour of a frankly anti-natural treatment. As regards the character of Buddhist art, Mr. Vincent Smith observes that "from the seventh century," that is, after the definite decline of Buddhism, "we find in sculpture few traces of the kindly, human spirit and naturalistic treatment which distinguished the ancient schools, mainly devoted to the service of Buddhism." Buddhist art is, in short, the Renaissance or Humanist period of Indian art, and the Greek influence, represented by the Gandharan school, played much the same part in it which it afterwards played in Europe. If, however, Buddhist art is the outcome of a new spirit of humanism in Indian ideas and a new sympathy with man and Nature, it always quite distinctly indicates the limitations of that spirit. Its knowledge is imperfect and its sympathy incomplete, for neither was Buddhism itself a complete justification of the temporal. The art was the measure of an idea which

had indeed penetrated society and touched all hearts, yet which was a revolt, none the less, against something more fundamental than itself, and which always felt behind it the presence of the deeper thought. Buddhist art is precisely of a similar quality, and its symptoms of feeble vitality and insufficient knowledge, combined with its lack of the genuine plastic instinct, reveal how incomplete was the hold of the humanist movement on the mind of the race.

Let me beg the reader, while the contrast is still before us, to take his stand at that point where Buddhist art gives way to Hindu and look before and after. What does he see? Looking backward he sees a humanist religion and a humanist art arising together and advancing hand in hand through the centuries; thought sympathising with life and art reflecting that sympathy. Then he sees, as the shape of a monster looms up through deep water, an older philosophy re-emerging out of the depths of time, and, with its ancient doctrine of the unreality of matter, undermining the genial humanism of its rival. And then, knowing what to expect, he turns to art and watches her attempts at naturalistic treatment and vague gropings after a right representation of things falter and fade, and in their place those forms arise which are themselves a repudiation of all natural laws.

At every stage art answers to life. We set out to answer the question why Indian art is dogged by a chronic incapacity to deal with nature as if she were real; and the answer we arrive at is, because Indian thought has assiduously inculcated Nature's unreality. Let the thought be relaxed and a breath of nature steals into art. Let it be reaffirmed and naturalism makes way for every kind of anatomical outrage. And art in this but samples all life, for turning to life do we not perceive the same force everywhere in action? Are not all kinds of mundane knowledge, all literature, all science, all ideas of practical government side-tracked by the same fatal doubt. Watch that doubt at its work, dissolving the very material



of thought and turning the promise of a great civilisation into a shadow and a dream. Is not Mr. Havell right ; does not the close connection between Indian thought and art exist ? Yes, only, as it seems to me, not just as he sees it. It is not the spiritual quality of the thought which the art expresses ; it has not reverence enough for its medium to be able to do that. What it does express clearly enough is the power of that awful doctrine, which, by declaring the unreality of matter, has permanently degraded the very substance in which art and life alike must operate.

Let us, I would say, finally, in these days of give and take between East and West, keep in view, if we can, the essentials of the situation. So much is being written of the Eastern spiritual influence, and ideas favourable to that influence are so much in the air, that it may well seem to argue a certain dulness of understanding not to enlist in that cause. No doubt those who are able to go along with Mr. Havell and distil a spiritual meaning from the specimens of art which adorn his pages must feel that they are susceptible to more delicate currents of emotion than those who persist in the old scientific art of the Renaissance. Yet I would urge that a due regard for the scientific achievements of Western art need not argue a lack of apprehension of spiritual motives. On the contrary, it is maintainable that it is in the interest of the spiritual motive that the material means of expression have to be defended, for it may be only through the material medium that the spiritual ever can utter itself at all. The difference between Eastern and Western thought is, as we said, that the former rejects Nature, holding it a barrier between the soul and true perception, whereas the latter accepts Nature as the interpreter of the spiritual ideas which lie behind it. In this conflict of opinion, which always has separated East from West and which is at the root of all those early heresies which rent Christendom in two, it is the primary assumption of the West of the dignity and worth of Nature, which places art on a secure footing.



And not art alone, for just as we saw that, under the Eastern denial of Nature, all natural sciences withered and died, so do we see that, under the Western recognition of Nature, all natural science has flourished and developed. Art in both cases is of a piece with the rest of life and equally inculcates the same truth, that it is through the natural the supernatural must speak if it is to speak at all. Therefore, we say, reverence the natural, study its laws and reflect upon all its processes of construction and development. It is in this that art is rooted. Like that ladder, fixed on earth but reaching to heaven, on which angels ascended and descended, art is the chief reconciler of finite and infinite. It is part of the Western endeavour, acting through science, philosophy, poetry and all research, and whether they know it or not egging them forward on their course, to realise the spiritual through the material. We have need for this end of all the artistic science that came out of Athens and Florence, just as we have need of all the natural science that forms the staple of European education. Both, without doubt, are fated to find their destination in a spiritualism which but for them would have remained for ever unattainable.

Therefore it seems that to rail at the natural is to undermine the spiritual itself. Those critics, in truth, who make so light of natural law are not only degrading both Nature and art but are destroying our only hope of ever attaining the very end which they themselves profess to have in view, namely, the expression of the spiritual. Let us have a little patience. Life has felt an impulse which art is yet cold to. It needs must be so since life must first experience the emotions which subsequently inspire art. But because we feel more than we can express, is that a reason that we should repudiate our sole means of expression altogether? We shall reach to something more in the way of spiritual articulation by and by, no doubt, but it will only be with the help of our mundane knowledge that we shall do it. Mr. Havell

despises the great Greeks and Florentines for their earthly science, but let us rather honour the great Greeks and Florentines since it is through that earthly science of theirs that art will one day attain to the utterance of spiritual ideas.

## CHAPTER VI

### EASTERN ART AND WESTERN CRITICS

The art of Japan considered in relation to the spiritual and intellectual qualities of the race.

ALL great art is great in one of two ways, either by depth of feeling or depth of thought. What, leaving Indian art, has the art of the Far East, the art of China and Japan to offer us in those respects? My own feeling about Japanese painting is that, with a good deal of decorative value, it has little of emotional depth and less of intellectual interest, and up to a certain point so distinguished a critic as Mr. Binyon seems to go with me. "The painting of Asia," he observes, "is throughout its main tradition an art of line." And a page or two farther on, having repeated that, "This painting is an art of line rather than an art of colour," he goes on to qualify his statement thus: "Yet it is not difficult to see how an art of line can come to have for one of its chief characteristics, and for its most obvious attraction, the charm of colour. The Japanese prints of the eighteenth century, for instance, proved a revelation of exquisite colour to Europeans, and yet they too are in their essence linear designs. The reason is that these linear designs aim at no illusion of relief and ignore cast shadows. The spaces to be coloured are flat spaces, and the instinct of the artist is to invent a harmony of colour which intensifies and gives added charm to the harmony of line. Such an art never loses sight of the

primary condition of a picture as a decoration on a flat wall ; and with this decorative aim the free and undistracted development of colour-harmonies is naturally associated." Here we have, as the reader will see, a description of a purely decorative school of painting. The colour indicated, flat and on the surface, is decorative colour ; the linear designs, which " aim at no illusion of relief and ignore cast shadows," are decorative designs. The " decorative aim," in short, of the entire treatment is, as Mr. Binyon confesses, never lost sight of.

I agree, but what is implied in this ? Mr. Binyon does not set about defining decorative painting, but he gives us some pretty exact notions of its quality nevertheless. It is flat, ignores cast shadows, and depends chiefly upon line. Well, then, whereabouts in the history of art does that kind of painting come, and at what point does it stop, of which flatness, repudiation of cast shadows, and dependence on line are the principal attributes ?

If the reader can, as the Germans say, " think himself into the skin " of the palaeolithic cave-man who first smeared the walls of his cave with yellow ochre or red clay, and then into that of his neighbour and rival artist who essayed to scratch the likeness of a running elk or antelope on a piece of ivory, he will be aware that the two processes proceed from different impulses or desires of the mind. His wish, as the first cave-man, is simply to enjoy a gay appearance which has in it no mental or intellectual significance whatever, and his pleasure, so far as it goes, is entirely a pleasure of the feelings. On the other hand, his wish, as the second cave-man, is to express a meaning and communicate an idea, and his art is so inspired by that aim as, in the stage of hieroglyphics and ideographs, to be inseparably bound up with the history of writing itself. In neither case probably is the emotion or the thought felt and communicated by the artist of any great depth or intellectual significance, but already the difference of root and character between emotional art and representative or imitative art is marked and distinguished.

Nor, though mingling, are they ever afterwards wholly fused. That branch of art which ministers to contemplation comes by degrees to feed upon the life of the contemplative East. Developing in method and process to answer to man's deepening emotional consciousness, it remains essentially the same in character. The mosaics of a Byzantine, the stained glass of an early Gothic interior, both derived immediately from Eastern sources and steeped in the mysticism of the Indian and Persian temperament, are examples of the power it can attain to. Yet these mighty manifestations of the influence of art, though greatly intensified and developed, are still similar in kind to the efforts of the primitive cave-dauber, and the pleasure they afford is but a deepening and enriching of that which he sought to communicate. The branch of art, on the contrary, which aspires to transmit ideas passes into the charge of the intellectual West, and the solution of the many difficulties which beset it become the care of Western study and thought. And, as with emotional so now with intellectual art, as thought deepens, the power of expression of the art deepens with it, yet retains its original character. The sculptures of a Phidias or a Michelangelo, however far ahead in depth and power of thought, are still similar in kind to the first attempts at form-delineation of the palaeolithic age. Perhaps the most graphic illustration of the contrast between the two styles we have been discussing is offered by the great rival schools of Venetian and Florentine art, the former of which, primarily sensuous and emotional in its appeal, is inspired by the intense Orientalism of Venetian life; while the latter, with less of feeling in it, but far more of thought, draws for its main incentive upon the strain of classic intellectualism.

But now will the reader consider this further point? I have said that, as emotion gained in depth and intellect in power, so did emotional art and intellectual art gain in depth and power also. Is this change, let us now go on to ask, in the sphere of art gradual and insensible, or is it



marked by notable transitions in method and process? If we compare the primitive attempts in either style with their later developments, we shall find that each passes through a very clearly marked transition. The early attempts of our cave-men at colour decoration are confined to the use of flat colour or colour on the surface. That is a use of colour which undoubtedly has its merits and is capable of affording distinct pleasure. But it is not the use of colour which most affects us, and the pleasure it gives tends, like the colour itself, to superficiality. The great effects of colour, those which we think of not as instances of decorative colour but of emotional or sensuous colour, have an inward depth and volume added to them; and in every case where this depth and volume are added we shall find that the agent employed to effect the change is *chiaroscuro*. We deal in these pages with three such cases in Gothic and Byzantine architecture and Venetian painting. Take any French cathedral which has retained, as most of them have, their early stained glass, and what is the character of the colouring of the interior? It certainly is not "flat and on the surface," but in richest tones and blending notes pervades and holds possession of the whole interior space of the building. At the same time the colour-scheme could not act upon this space at all save through the agency of *chiaroscuro*. It is the prevailing system of light and shade, the depths of obscurity and the glowing beams which penetrate and take hold of it, which enables the colour to act. So, too, it is with Byzantine colour. This, like Gothic, is of great sensuous power, and this sensuous power it owes to the fact that it is not flat and not on the surface. But how does it escape superficiality? Structurally and fundamentally—for the Greeks worked out the thought with a thoroughness beyond the Gothic range—it owes its escape to its use of nothing but rounded and softly outlined forms, such as vaults, domes, and apses, which give the impression that the gold of the mosaic, far from being of superficial extent only, is the actual material out of which

the whole structure has been, as it were, kneaded ; but in part also, and that an essential one, it owes it to the presence of a powerful scheme of chiaroscuro which gives depth and richness and lustre to the colour itself. Admit the full light of day to either interior—destroy, that is to say, its scheme of chiaroscuro—and the colour is struck dead. Again, in the case of Venetian painting there is the same depth, the same melting suffusion and glow, substituted for the old decorative superficiality, and here too the cause of the transition is the tremendous scheme of chiaroscuro in which and through which the colour acts. If the reader will take the trouble to compare a few photographs of each of these subjects he will be struck by a remarkable similarity between them, even as communicated by the camera. The fact is, the camera, though it cannot give the colour, yet gives in each case the scheme of chiaroscuro, the graduated masses of light and shade which control the colour, and this vehicle, used with the same effect in each of the great colour styles I have been noticing, produces that sense of similarity in appearance which the photographs reveal.

What, then, we find in regard to colour is this, that, in passing from the superficial, decorative stage to the profoundly emotional stage, colour itself assumes a depth and volume which did not belong to it as a surface decoration, and that the recognisable mark of the transition is the prominent role assigned to the influence of chiaroscuro. We can appeal to all the great colour-schools in art to bear us out in this conclusion, and we can verify it further by reflecting that Nature and art are in this agreed and that all the great sensuous colour-effects of Nature, as in autumn woods and tropical jungles, are produced by the very means we have been discussing. To turn now to Japanese art, what is Mr. Binyon's view of the matter ? He admits that Japanese colour is flat and on the surface, and he proceeds to make of these traits its chief merit. It is in proportion as the artist becomes discontented with flat colour, he tells us, and develops the use of chiaroscuro that

his "sense for colour becomes weak and uncertain." In short, it is Mr. Binyon's contention that superficial and merely decorative colour is the finest of all, and that it is when colour, passing under the control of chiaroscuro, ceases to be merely superficial that it "becomes weak and uncertain." On this view he deliberately insists. "Why is it," he goes on to ask, "that in Italian painting before the Renaissance, even when no decided genius for colour is shown, the colour of quite minor, insignificant, and provincial masters pleases us? It is because," he answers his question, "the painting of those early periods was as yet unconfused and undistracted by the problems of chiaroscuro." So, because flat decorative colour is pleasant and agreeable enough in its way, and is perhaps the easiest to manage and handle, we are to admit that it constitutes the noblest colour-treatment possible, and that any departure from it must be a falling-off. The assumption is in contradiction to the whole evidence of art. Grant it and you must grant immediately that the most "weak," the most "uncertain" of all colour-schemes are those comprised in the golden-brown twilight of Chartres, or the mellow interior of St. Mark's, or in the glowing canvases of those whom, by a kind of mockery, as it would seem, we have got into the habit of referring to as the great Venetian "colourists." Why, Mr. Binyon has but to look round him at the common aspects of Nature to detect the fallacy he has taken up with. He has but to pass from the outer landscape into the depths of an October wood, where the rich tones of yellow blend and melt in the darkness of the shadows round him, to feel how magical is the sense of emotional depth added to colour by chiaroscuro. He has but to compare a bit of blue chalk with a sapphire to perceive that superficial colour appeals to superficial feeling, and that depth added to such colour speaks to answering depths in our own souls.

So far I have attempted to give some reason for my belief that Japanese painting, with all its decorative value,

has little emotional depth. Passing now from colour to form, let us take the other side of art and endeavour to show why perhaps it is deficient in intellectual interest. Mr. Binyon again and again assures us that Japanese art is essentially an art of line, and I agree with him just as I agreed with him when he said that Japanese colour was flat and on the surface. I agree, and I go on to remark that of all the indictments it is possible to bring against the art of any nation, the indictment that it is essentially an art of line—in other words, that its capacity for form-expression is satisfied with what line can yield—is the most condemnatory possible. Let us refer once more to our cave-man and his elk. The earliest primitive idea, or realisation of form, consisting as it does in the recognition of the limits of a particular body and its separation from its surroundings, has always expressed itself in the drawing of an outline. As, however, knowledge and comprehension of the contents of form have progressed, line has been reinforced by other methods capable of conveying this added fulness of knowledge, and all the resources of tone and of relief obtainable by brush and chisel have been employed to suggest a sense of the actual substance and quality of the thing depicted. Every addition in artistic knowledge of this kind has been demonstrably due to an all-round increase in intellectual vitality, the increase of intellectual consciousness demanding more fulness of expression than mere line can afford. It was so the Greek movement acted upon art. It was so the Renaissance movement acted upon art. Here too, then, on this intellectual side of art the transition from the primitive to the riper phase is clearly enough marked. Just as we said of the old treatment of colour that it took to itself a new emotional power when it ceased to be flat and on the surface, so do we find that form-delineation takes to itself a new intellectual power when mere outline ceases to satisfy it. But Japanese painting always, as Mr. Binyon points out, remains satisfied with line. Quite so, and it remains satisfied with line because



it is powerless to press either form or colour beyond the decorative stage ; because, in other words, it is as lacking in intellectual power as in emotional depth.

According, however, to Mr. Binyon, the quality of Japanese line is so wonderful that it is a substitute in itself for all other modes of expression. " The painting of Asia," he says, " is throughout its main tradition an art of line " ; but, he adds, " limited to line, the painters of Asia have concentrated centuries of thought on the effort to make that line intimately expressive of form ; and with mere contour they succeed in producing the illusion of perfect modelling." Now this claim, the claim that a race which restricts itself to line can get an unusual amount of expression out of that vehicle—is of considerable interest and importance. Mr. Fry, in a recent article in the *Nation* on Oriental Art, has advanced the same claim in connection with Egyptian and Assyrian art. Alluding to a picture of a horse supposed to be by Han Kan, in the drawing of which he says there is " a solemnity and grandeur which must, one feels, derive from a remote antiquity," he goes on to observe :

The form is revealed by a line of astonishing force and simplicity ; it has an intensity of definition, a containing power which seems to belong to another race. There is still something left of that primal and immediate perception of form that the artists of Egypt and Assyria possessed in the youth of the world, something that seems altogether to have evaporated from art alike in East and West.

It will be seen that this criticism agrees with Mr. Binyon's estimate of Japanese line. Both critics lend themselves to the doctrine that line is at its greatest and most expressive when it alone is responsible for the effect of form produced ; that is to say, in times when artists were lacking in any consciousness of form which it was beyond the power of line to convey.

In short, both these critics propound the doctrine that the sense for form was at its greatest where the means for expressing form were at their narrowest. The



argument contradicts all our experience. It is our capacity to appreciate and understand the nature of substances—their qualities, the laws which made them and maintain them, the hidden causes which control their motions, their development and their decay—which interpret to us the significance of form. It seems impossible to dispute this. The most obvious fact about the art of the Greeks is its love and appreciation of the quality of form. The most obvious fact about the Greek mind is its equal love of investigation and intellectual activity generally. Similarly with Florentine art. Florentine art, as Mr. Berenson and Professor Bode and others have pointed out, is “essentially an art of form,” and Florence itself was the headquarters of the intellectual revival. Intellectual activity in the history of art is the influence which has generated susceptibility to form. It is natural that this should be so, for it is the play of reason upon things which reveals their nature and contents and the significance of their substance, and the appreciation of this quality of form is merely the artistic utterance of this play of the mind. Moreover, the conclusion holds good, not as a matter of theory, but as a matter of fact, for those periods in the history of men most remarkable for intellectual initiative and the love of thinking have been precisely the periods in the history of art which have exploited and developed the quality of form.

Indeed we would think it ought to be evident that automatic repetition itself was sufficient to prove the absence of any vital sense for form. It is impossible to conceive artists from generation to generation repeating the same attitudes and expressions and gestures and curtailing their work to the same fixity of outline, yet themselves palpitating all the time with an intimate sense of the significance of form. Such a sense would be bound to modify and vary the existing tradition by its own fresh perceptions, however strong the tradition might be.

So that for two reasons it seems impossible to sustain

Mr. Fry's position. In the first place, to stick at mere outline argues in itself an insensibility to the claims of form, for it is precisely a susceptibility to those claims which has led man to be discontented with the capacity of line and to supplement it with other expedients. In the second place, such a constant and continual iteration of the same automatic figures as are usual in Egyptian art is in itself proof positive of a decadence of intelligence ; that is to say, it is proof that no immediate and vital perception of any kind was animating the artists who thus carved and painted.

If it be asked why so many critics disagree with conclusions which seem fairly obvious, I can only say that the production of unvarying types in art, even though utterly meaningless and always the same, is the surest of all ways to impose on the imagination of a curious and impressionable generation. Such a generation will easily pour ideas and meanings of its own into the empty vessels which an unthinking age has prepared. The features of an Egyptian sphinx will to the modern critic appear charged with recondite and mystical meanings, and he will read into them all kinds of occult secrets and traces of an ancient knowledge long extinct. Really they mean nothing at all, nor were they meant to mean anything, nor did the idea that they ever could or should express anything ever occur to the man who carved them. Those lineaments are in all respects identical with those of scores and hundreds of other figures which occur in Egyptian art and on Egyptian sarcophagi and mummy-cases. The face had become a formula out of which all meaning had long perished. It was turned out in dozens of workshops up and down the Nile by sculptors who were careful to get their measurements right and gave no other thought to the matter. And it is precisely because it means so absolutely nothing that we can make it mean such a lot, just as it is only the vessel which is entirely empty that we can fill according to our fancy. It is the same with Egyptian line-work. The very fact that it is a conven-

tional pattern encourages us to quicken and sensitise it with the most wonderful expressiveness.

We ought not to be misled by the mere automatic regularity and the hard mechanical reiteration of certain formal outlines such as we see in Egyptian and Assyrian art. After all it is a poor criticism which cannot distinguish between the strength of routine and the strength of living thought and observation. Eastern line is the repetition of a formula, Western line is a report of reality. The latter, it is true, can never possess the cast-iron rigidity of the former, but what it does possess and what is much better, is a living and flexible adaptability to the vision from which it derives its significance. The West, though it may not so strictly confine itself to line, for it has more to say than line can communicate, nevertheless has got out of line alone far more than the East has ever got out of it. It has done so because, its mind being soaked in the consciousness of the substance, formation and character of what it is depicting, its line adapts itself, so far as line may, to the suggestion of these essential qualities. It expresses more, in short, because it has more to express. If, when we are turning over drawings and studies—brief jottings, perhaps, of gesture and movement by Renaissance artists, in which the pencil seems endowed with the significance of life itself, so magically is each stroke related to the muscle and substance of limb or body—if at such a moment we allow our mind to revert to the methods of Egyptian and Assyrian line-work, how destitute of living interest do they not seem, and how idle and unmeaning appears the applause with which it has become a kind of fashion to greet them. In the development of form-delineation from earliest primitive outline one of two things always happens: either the sense for form, keeping pace with a general intellectual advance, grows and increases, until line alone, though becoming ever more flexible and expressive, cannot satisfy it, and the co-operation of other agents has to be called in; or there is no general intellectual advance and the

sense for form does not grow, and line never has to be reinforced and never becomes more flexible and expressive, but on the contrary gives up by degrees the very thought of growth, and by and by falls helplessly back upon a formula. This, not the art of the West, is the kind of art from which, in Mr. Fry's phrase, all immediate perception of form seems altogether to have evaporated. The contention we are dealing with, the contention that an art which remains "essentially an art of line" can "with mere contour succeed in producing the illusion of perfect modelling" is paradoxical, for no art inspired by a sense of the actuality and substance of form can possibly remain content with mere contour. The means of expression always have grown and always must grow with the need of expression. This is why Mr. Binyon's true remark that Asiatic art is essentially an affair of line seems to me so damnatory a one, for it affords the strongest proof of the lack, behind that art, of any vital intellectual stimulus. As for the comparison with the West, if we could preserve our simplicity of mind and consent to see what is under our noses, we should acknowledge that the capacity of Western artists, from Holbein to Phil May, to express form by means of line is something Eastern art has simply no conception of.

I do not see how any criticism of Japanese art, whatever graces and accomplishments it may discover, can help taking note of the limitations we have been discussing. Such a criticism will be bound to recognise that on the decorative side Japanese art has not passed the phase when superficial pleasure merges into richness and depth of emotion, while on the representative or interpretative side it has not attained to anything of intellectual dignity and excellence. It is, in fact, a stunted and prematurely wizened art, destitute alike of the great qualities of the soul and the great qualities of the mind, and no amount of ecstasy and eloquence will prevent us eventually from recognising these two facts. They will declare themselves. Even if they be not openly acknowledged their effects



will be seen in the failure of Japanese art to lay a permanent hold on the imagination of the West.

It seems to me that, in proportion as the standard of excellence derived from Western art is flouted or discarded the duty of the critic to stand by it increases. More than art is at stake. The art of the West stands for the life of the West, and the deeper question which underlies the question of artistic merit is whether or not we shall accept the life of the West as in its nature positively progressive. Are we or are we not believers in the spirit of intellectual enlightenment with which Western life has endowed Western art? For my part I answer in the affirmative. I do not follow Mr. Binyon when he declares that all art is convention and that Japanese conventions are as likely to be right as European ones. It is not so. The work in this direction, begun by the Greeks and continued by the European nations, is secure and durable, for it is built on a faithful appreciation of the laws of Nature and of human sight. It is part of the central Western thought that knowledge of truth proceeds through the lower to the higher, and Western art and Western thought stand, in this, together. If we believe that all that the Western intellect has accomplished, all its patient scientific investigations which have laid broad and deep the knowledge of the material significance of Nature, are but the due and indispensable preparation for the understanding of her spiritual significance, then we must believe that the whole course of Western progress in art, in the direction of scientific truth and faithful representation, is the necessary preliminary condition, or training, through which she must pass, if she is ever adequately to utter divinely significant ideas. Our art is materialistic, Mr. Binyon complains. So be it; but it is truly and faithfully materialistic, and in proportion as it is truly and faithfully materialistic to-day we may hope that it will be truly and faithfully spiritual to-morrow.



## PART II

### CHAPTER VII<sup>1</sup>

#### THE CLASSIC POINT OF VIEW

THE beginning and end of all the interpretative value which art, or any other of the works of man, possesses consists in the fact that all that man creates he creates in his own image. Man is perpetually reproducing himself. He cannot poke the fire, or order a dinner, or make a speech, or plan a garden, or arrange a room but the result will be in some sort a replica of his own character. Now art is simply man's most characteristic work, that into which most of his character and what is most permanent and profound in his character, is poured. Further it is, in those creative epochs when it attains to anything of importance, not an individual and sporadic, but a collective and universal work. It is the self-expression not of a person but of an age. Only in proportion as the spirit of an age embodies itself in the art of that period does the resulting art become significant and coherent, and endowed with that kind of intelligibility and uniformity of development which made it as what we call a style.

But, if art is thus used to express the thoughts of man, it, of course, follows that it must itself derive its character direct from the mind of the age which it interprets. All the qualities we see in the art must have been living

<sup>1</sup> This second part, dealing with classic art, covers much the same ground as was covered by a former book of mine—*The Works of Man*—to which I would beg to refer the reader.

characteristics of that generation. They are to be explained and understood by reference to life and in no other way. Sometimes this reference to life is simple and sometimes difficult, according as the thought and mental attitude of the age was itself simple or complex. What has to be observed, at the beginning of any attempt to appreciate Greek art, is that in this case the message delivered is of the simplest possible kind. Greek art is perfectly articulate. It is never in doubt for a moment as to what it means. It never contradicts itself, or expresses itself with the slightest vagueness or uncertainty, nor is it subject to any reactions or periodic revolutions such as render art, as a rule, so self-contradictory in its reports ; rather it delivers a coherent and definite message which it is our own fault if we misunderstand.

But if Greek art is clear it is because Greek thought is clear. The articulate quality, the clear knowledge of what it means to say and how it means to say it, the entire absence of perplexity and confusion, the sense not of shadows but of cool and clear daylight which belong to Greek architecture and sculpture, belong to Greek thought. They were derived by Greek architecture and sculpture from the Greek mind, and it is in the Greek mind that we are first to seek their presence.

The quest is a very simple one. I have pointed out already that humanity is endowed with two means of enlightenment. These are the soul's apprehension of spiritual things, and the intellect's apprehension of temporal things. The most immediate difference between the two is that the first, though it consists of phases of intuition of incomparable depth and certitude, yet is none the less apparently vague and obscure in its reports, partly because its flashes of insight are intermittent and fitful, and partly because they are of such a nature as not to be fully expressible in any kind of human medium. They have the character therefore of hints, suggestions, and tentative guesses at truths too high to grasp, rather than the firmly outlined aspect of communicable facts.

Intellectual discrimination, on the other hand, has none of this vagueness. On the contrary, the more intellectual it is the more certain of itself and clear it is ; for intellect being that faculty which deals with a man's mortal surroundings, and with as much of his moral nature as finds its justification in this earthly state, its subject-matter, as well as its conclusions, are constantly open to the test of everyday experience.

It is the concern of intellect, not only to analyse all the processes of natural evolution, to trace effects to their causes, and to establish man, by right of this acquired knowledge, as in some sort the supreme manager and director of the earthly universe, but also to go on to consider the laws of conduct by which man himself should be guided, and the nature of the duty he owes to himself and others. Yet in their moral sphere also, as in the material and scientific, the results will be valuable as they are correctly reasoned and accurately defined. Intellectual ethics have nothing in common with mystical intuitions. They are merely efforts in correct reasoning touching the conduct of a rational being in his progress through the present world, and they are in all respects as definite and precise as any statements in regard to natural laws or events.

Intellect, then, is that faculty which deals with Nature and with man, and, dealing with what is present to our senses, its statements are or ought to be clearly defined ; whereas the spiritual faculty, dealing with things not present to our senses, is constantly suggestive rather than definite in exposition. Now the clearness, which is so notable a characteristic of Greek art, is merely the natural consequence of the overwhelmingly intellectual bias of the Greek mind. It must be remembered in explaining this bias that the Greeks may almost be said to be the discoverers of intellectual processes, so different in character was the Greek cast of thought from any which, so far as we know, had preceded it. Human progress is apt to proceed by the cultivation now of one side of the

mind, now of the other. The age when the spiritual faculty was most developed in England, and when spiritual contemplation was realised as a source of felicity, was an age when the intellectual faculty was very meagrely developed. Similarly, later, in the time of the Renaissance, when intellect was once more assiduously cultivated, the run on the new faculty quite overshadowed the old, so that it quickly fell into contempt and desuetude. If this is apt to be the case, and if these effects could be produced by an intellectual revival at second hand, we shall not be surprised if the original practice of that kind of thinking wholly engrossed the minds of its discoverers. If to a Florentine of the Renaissance was given the excitement of reopening forgotten paths and recognising, as he advanced, the footsteps of an earlier generation, to the Athenian of the classic age was given the more thrilling excitement of the first survey of a virgin country.

The reliance on human intelligence, which is the inspiration of classicalism, is the Greek gift to the world. Professor Butcher is very explicit on this point. "It was the privilege of the Greeks to *discover* the sovereign efficacy of reason." He adds that "it was Ionia that *gave birth* to an idea which was foreign to the East, but has become the starting-point of modern science—the idea that Nature works by fixed laws. A fragment of Euripides speaks of him as 'happy who has learned to search into causes,' who 'discovers the deathless and ageless order of Nature, whence it arose, the 'how and the why.'" And again he says: "The early poet-philosopher of Ionia *gave the impulse* which has carried the human intellect forward across the line which separates empirical from scientific knowledge; and the Greek precocity of mind in this direction, unlike that of the Orientals, had in it the promise of uninterrupted advance in the future." I have in these quotations underlined the words which indicate that not only were the Greeks intellectual in their genius, but that they

originated that kind of investigation, and in effect started intellect on its all-conquering career. It was the Greeks who *discovered* the efficacy of reason, who *gave birth* to the appreciation of natural law, who *gave the impulse* to which science owes its development. In truth, whoever follows the course of human history through the Assyrian and Egyptian dynasties to the dawn of the Greek civilisation, must be aware, in the latter event, of a new force which is being introduced into human affairs. The power which rules Egypt and Assyria is the power of routine. They are remote from us and unintelligible to us because the capacity which we rely on is inoperative in their lives. In all branches of knowledge, in agriculture, medicine, mathematics, literature, and the sciences there exists in Egypt and Assyria no trace of progress or of movement of any kind from a dim antiquity to the last days of those empires. All subjects of thought, all kinds of knowledge remain on the banks of the Nile and of the Euphrates, stunted and petrified and motionless. The total reached is never more than that amount which merely manual practice and a perpetual repetition can accomplish.

The infallible test of intellectual activity is the assertion by man of his superiority to his surroundings ; his assertion, that is to say, of his right to control and alter and adapt to his own wishes the material circumstances in which he finds himself. This must always be so ; for intellect being the power which comprehends the universe and its laws—in other words, intellect being the power which gives man control of his surroundings—it follows that the development and cultivation of intellect will awaken in man the consciousness that he possesses this power and the desire to use it. It is scarcely necessary to point out in support of what is so obvious that every intellectual age has been primarily remarkable for its keen interest in all mundane forms of knowledge, and is to be distinguished by its progressive action and the constant changes and alterations in the environment



of life which naturally follow from the perception that man is the contröller of circumstances.

There is not a trace of this thought in the earlier civilisations. Assyria and Egypt are images of empires in which, far from man having assumed the ascendancy over matter, matter has assumed a complete ascendancy over man. Generation after generation, in endless procession, treads in the footsteps of its predecessors ; worships the same gross productive powers of Nile and sun, and reproduces the same rule-of-thumb knowledge and narrow manual efficiency which unvarying repetition naturally engenders. No Egyptian, no Assyrian dreams for an instant of altering, inventing, experimenting, or in any way interfering in the least particular with a routine of life which bears the sanction of ages.

Imposing, at least in scale, as Egyptian monuments may be, they are all of such a monotonous, repetitive character as makes them appear rather the result of the physical circumstances of Egypt and the life of obedience to those circumstances led there than of conscious thought. They bear out the impression one receives from reading Egyptian history, that the whole of Egyptian life is under the sway of an iron routine. We ourselves can no more claim kindred with such races than we can claim kindred with beavers. Our Egyptologists have made of late superhuman efforts to bridge the gulf. The dry sands of Egypt have yielded up to them the sarcophagi and mummied forms of many a ruler and potentate of old Egypt. Sanmaout and the Princess Nafêrouriya, Isis, the mother of Thôutmosis, the red granite statue of Toutânoukhamanou, and several others are among the figures recently discovered and illustrated to the life by Sir G. Maspero in his latest volume. Yet all these efforts are in vain. No one, save students and professors, will ever be really interested in the Princess Nafêrouriya and her friends. They lived, but for us they never lived ; for that which we call life in human beings is the life of intellect and thought, and those poor mummies

never lived that life, or ever aspired to anything but to wear smoother the rut which former generations had already worn so smooth ; or ever for one moment dreamt of questioning the authority of the circumstances in which they found themselves, or asserting their right to mould and control their environment in the least particular.

Theirs was not this privilege of intellect. No, but "among the ideas common to Thucydides and Demosthenes this is one—that reason is a formative and conquering power ; that a strong and clear intelligence can prevail over outward circumstances and shape events." The whole difference between Egyptian and Greek is explained in those words ; and our own sense of the vitality in Greek life and thought and art is explained in them too. To pass from Egyptian or Assyrian history into Greek is exactly like passing from the Egyptian and Assyrian rooms into the Greek room at the British Museum. It is to exchange a dull mechanical routine and the tyranny of an inflexible convention for the human sympathy, the human interest, and the vigour and flexibility of life. But at the same time, equally under art and under life, lies the simple cause of the revolution in the fact that the Greeks were the first people to place themselves under the guidance of the intellectual faculty, whose instinct it is never to acquiesce in routine or accept convention, but to test the nature of all things and see all things as they are.

The Greeks, then, specialised in intellectual culture. While in the East the tendency was for life to feed exclusively on the emotional faculty, the tendency in the West was for it to feed exclusively on the intellectual faculty. The consequence of this is that there runs through all classical thought a glorification of the same class or family of virtues, tending to produce an ideal character, the pattern man, as it were, of the classical epoch. And this pattern man, sculptured for us by classic thought, whom we see presiding over that world,

is so clearly defined and uniformly the same that there is no mistaking his main attribute for a moment.

The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill,

are qualities which he possesses in perfection. All that experience and thought can suggest to guide and sustain him he seeks, but he seeks no more. To survey with precision reason's field of operations was one-half of his endeavour; to sustain with composure all that lay outside of that field and was uncontrollable or inexplicable was the other half. The ideal character of the epoch is essentially self-reliant and self-sufficient, for within the domain marked off by reason as his own sphere of action he is supreme. His conduct, his thoughts, his aims, all that lies within reach of his attainment are subject to his examination and analysis; and it is for him to determine their claims and relative degrees of merit. "Generally speaking," writes Mr. Osborn Taylor, "excellence and right in every school of pagan ethics was a matter of the rational and strenuous endeavour of the enlightened man. When he acted wrongly, he had his passion or ignorance to blame; when he acted aright, he might congratulate himself. A pagan is neither tempted by the devil nor very definitely helped by God. Right conduct, that is conduct most conducive to the actor's welfare, is whatever human experience and reason have approved. Approval by the best human reason based on the widest human knowledge was the standard."

All this is intellect's province. The representative of the classic spirit is moved by no plea, is swayed by no impulse, is drawn on by no object or ambition which cannot explain itself clearly. His every thought, rational in character, promises a definable subject-matter. Marcus Aurelius's exhortation: "So order your thoughts that if any one were at any time to say, What are you now thinking about? you could without hesita-

tion, reply, Of this, or of that," is the classic rule of thinking.

Any one who fixes his attention on this habit of thought will have no difficulty in divining what its effect will be upon art. The pagan world built on intellectualism just as exclusively as the Oriental world built on emotionalism. As the Hindu turns from the finite that he may be absorbed into the infinite, so the Greek turns from the infinite that he may command the finite. Clear and cool, temperate and exact, the Greek mind is enamoured of the science of definition. Instinctively it trusts only that which it can define, regarding as most stable those very phenomena which to the Oriental seemed most illusory. What is the artistic vehicle or medium that will fit such a mind? Is it not evident that this stern concentration on the definable, this love of firm outlines and horror of anything vague and elusive must instinctively find expression in terms of form? All Greek thought is form already. Its intellectual character maintains it in that condition. All its expressions about itself, its predilection for "exact thinking," for "solid reasons," for "clear-cut logic," for "precision of statement," and the like, are themselves applicable to form. Unless we have fallen into the habit of ignoring the most primitive of all facts about art, the fact that it expresses life and reflects the lineaments of life—and perhaps in days like these when life and art have become, to their mutual discomfiture, so entirely separated there is some excuse for our falling into that mistake—we shall know already from a glance at the Greek mind what we are to expect from Greek art. Here are no dreams and visions, here are no inward depths of spiritual vision such as must utter themselves in azures and crimsons of a corresponding depth and intensity. Here are forms alone. Greek art will be an art of form.

Before, however, passing to a consideration of that art there are two observations to be made. We have spoken of the strict limitations of Greek thought. What



did those limitations include? It is not to be supposed that because the Greek was an intellectualist he was therefore a gross materialist. Matter is intellect's subject, but so also is man and the mind of man. Moral and ethical considerations belong to man's human state and relate to his conduct as a social being, and it is especially on the plane of the moral and the ethical that the Greeks are most themselves, most lucid in their observations, most severe with themselves, and most consistent. I say consistent because, though definition is here difficult and subtle, and demands unusual precision of thought, it is still steadily pursued and maintained. There is, as I have pointed out, a profound difference between spiritual and intellectual ethics. The former extend to entire self-obliteration, and are able to secure a foretaste of a felicity and an inspiration which seem rather to have been sent down from above than to have grown up on the earth. The latter, on the contrary, though they represent earth's best fruits, yet still are of the earth, and can be measured by an earthly standard. The Greeks could define *all* their ideal man. There was no part of him that went beyond precise articulation; yet up to the limits of articulation he went. The love of the Greek, in conduct and in thought, of right proportion and a perfect lucidity; his equal shrinking from the eccentric and the abnormal, from all vagueness, from short-lived, spasmodic, or contradictory impulses and whims; his impatience of superfluities and irrelevancies, and his final quest for that unity which is attained by the steady pursuit of a foreseen end—all these and similar traits, the best that intellect could divine, noble though they are, yet remain strictly comprehensible and definable. It is precisely these precepts of proportion, unity, the elimination of the irrelevant, and so on which, taken over from life, become the principles of Greek art. They can produce noble art because they can produce noble life, yet neither in life nor in art are they permanently and finally satisfying to man.



And this brings me to the second consideration I spoke of, to the consideration, namely, that the perfection and completeness of the classical state of being was really a fugitive and necessarily passing state of being. It could not be expected to endure. In excluding all that belonged to spiritual perception, all that could blur and mar the sculptured exactitude of his own order of ideas, the Greek was excluding faculties which could not be permanently silenced. It is sometimes pointed out, by way of asserting their spiritual aptitude, that among the Greeks there do occur from time to time individuals, such as Thales, Xenophanes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, who are evidently endowed with that kind of spiritual susceptibility which we call mysticism. The attitude, however, was not normal in the sense of being a national characteristic. It is in the nature of intellect at its best, to be in the long run dissatisfied with its own achievement, to press analysis to the point where its own explanations are inadequate, and it finds itself driven either to turn back or to admit into its councils the spiritual sense which it has hitherto excluded. At intervals through Greek history individuals are to be met with who have attained to this pitch. Profiting by the extraordinary Greek disinterestedness, which would hearken to reason even in condemnation of reason, they were introduced by intellect itself to its own rival. But these philosophers were solitary and far from being representative. How little representative they were is well shown by the fate of the most illustrious of their number. Has the reader ever asked himself the real cause of the execution of Socrates ; of a man virtuous, blameless, who had fought for his country, and upheld on all occasions the rights of Athenian citizens, yet who by the citizens themselves—not the aristocrats who might have had some excuse for the act, but the Democracy whose champion he was—was done to death ?

In what was he guilty ? He was accused of denying the gods and corrupting the youth of Athens, and, if the

reader wonders that charges of such a kind should be alleged of a man of so much inward discernment and spiritual grace, let him consider the tendency of Socrates' philosophy in connection with the prevailing Greek cast of ideas. The whole drift and tendency of Socrates' arguments is to question the sufficiency of merely intellectual methods. Over and over again he works up to the proof that we cannot know, and do not know, the very things that we think ourselves most sure of knowing. The influence of such a man was subversive of what we may call the Greek faith, the faith in reason and reason's defining power. It was for this that the most moral of men was indicted as an offender against public morality. To inculcate a habit of analysing and disintegrating the reasoned motives of conduct on which the state relied was, in effect, to unsettle men's minds and undermine the principles which made social coherence possible. The thought which Socrates was dissolving was the thought which had built the Parthenon, which had carved the Greek gods and goddesses, and above all had evolved that pattern man, as we have called him, which represented all that every Greek aspired to be. Intellectual self-sufficiency was the inspiration of all these, and intellectual self-sufficiency was what Socrates was undermining. His fate was the fate of all who bring ideas not yet understood to take the place of the ideas on which the life of the present rests. They are the destroyers of all that makes life intelligible and possible. They are anarchists, atheists, blasphemers. So Athens felt when she handed the cup to Socrates; so Jerusalem felt when she called out, Crucify Him, crucify Him. What could better show the ascendancy which intellect had attained to in Greek society, and the completeness with which it stood in the stead of spiritual aspiration and intuition, than the fate meted out by the Athenian people to their profoundest spiritual teacher?

Yet in respect of the Greek people, too, there occurred a gradual wearing out of the processes of intellect, accom-

panied by an ever-growing consciousness that the mind possessed other more subtle and spiritual modes of divination. This change in the character of Greek thought is one of the most significant events as well in the history of art as in the history of ideas. It is this which is responsible for the collapse of classic art and for the substitution of that more emotional and spiritual artistic style known as Hellenistic. Further, the movement has this claim to our attention that it opens up a connection with modern life which is still maintained.

The self-sufficiency of the classic mind was penetrated both from within and without. Weakened, as it had been, and shaken by its own perception of the inadequacy of a purely intellectual interpretation of the universe, it was of a sudden subjected to an infusion of Eastern ideas. The Macedonian imperialism had for its ultimate effect the bridging of the gulf between East and West. It opened to the Greek a new world of thought. "As the cleverest man of all the Mediterranean and Asiatic world he could use whatever circumstances he found himself in. And as his strenuous insistence on his own distinctive qualities and loves was passing from him, there was no reason why he should not adapt himself to circumstances, and also adopt whatever element or view of life seemed agreeable or expedient." The view of life presented to him by the East might be precisely that view which the classic age had so consistently discountenanced and so severely held in check; nevertheless, disenchanted with his own ideas, he proceeded to assimilate those of the East, and especially he thirstily quaffed at the stream of mystical thought of which the East is the perennial source.

All this was to give, as Mr. Taylor expresses it, an "Oriental colour" to the Greek thought of the following centuries, and, in so doing, it gave, of course, an Oriental bias to the Greek influence on Rome and on the West. The Greek mind of necessity systematised whatever thoughts it took up with, and of the systems in

which the Eastern ideal came to be embodied the most influential has become known as Neo-Platonism. It is enough for our purpose to point out, in regard to this philosophy, that its founder was a Greek of Alexandria, dwelling in the midst of the busiest traffic in Eastern ideas, and that it consists itself in an attempt to organise and formulate the divinations of Eastern mysticism. The soul's capacity of its own act to unite itself with the absolute is the essence of Neo-Platonic thought, and has never been more explicitly or eloquently stated than by the founder of the movement. To grasp the absolute there needs a faculty, according to Plotinus, not of the mind but of the soul. The perception of ultimate truth is not an active process of reason, but a passive condition of spiritual being, an act of sight on the soul's part, inducing a realisation of spiritual existence amounting at last to absorption into the divine consciousness, and the ecstasy of perfect union. Four times, according to his pupil Porphyry, did Plotinus himself attain to the mystical rapture of entire self-annihilation.

Well, here is a thought of which it is very easy to recognise the origin. The thought of Plotinus is the thought of the East ; its only thought, the point round which its mind perpetually revolves, and the pivot of its whole spiritual life. " Alexandrian Neo-Platonism, uniting the tenets of many schools, first bringing the mysticism of the East into connection with the logical philosophies of Greece, had opened up a new ground of argument or controversy for the minds of all the world " (Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*). Moreover, Neo - Platonism was but one agent in an exchange which was universal. The minds of all educated and thoughtful people, and especially, as we know, of many of the doctors and teachers who were laying the foundations of the Christian Church, were soaked more or less in these ideas ; and the recognition by such leaders as Clement and Origen of two kinds of faith, the belief of the mind and the direct vision of the soul, is in fact an express recognition of the Oriental



principle. The true knowers, γνωστικοί, were those who possessed this mystical gift of spiritual vision, who used the soul as an apprehending medium, an eye to see with. It is Yājñavalkhiya over again. It is the ancient secret which was whispered in Indian forests, and which struggles for utterance in the Upanishads.

The point it is essential to emphasise, if we would understand later European developments, is that the spiritualising process we are speaking of, which towards the end of the pagan era was modifying the temperament of the Western world, was the consequence of the fusion of Eastern with Western thought. The very common assumption that it was due to the influence of Christianity is evidently misleading. So far from this being the case, so far from Christianity having originated the movement, it is certain that, had not the movement been already in full swing, Christianity itself could have made no headway of its own. It is true that the two main facts of the Christian religion seem to be addressed respectively to East and West. In the Ascension the Eastern yearning after the infinite is quite literally fulfilled. The passing through and out of physical death as a mere irrelevancy, the lifting of self out of the mortal sphere into the realm of spiritual reality, are in sympathy with Oriental ideas. Any Oriental would at once feel that here was a doctrine to which his own spiritual experience readily responded. But would the Western man, so long as he remained purely Western, would the classical man, have felt this? On the contrary, it is certain from his whole cast of thought that such an express exaltation of the spiritual at the expense of the mortal state would have been entirely offensive to him. It would have broken down the whole rational system of philosophy on which he relied for support. His doctrine was the Incarnation. His anthropomorphic instinct, his tendency to cut every ideal to the human standard, would here find complete expression. His own deities were all incarnations. They were expressions of the divine in terms of the



human, and they recognised the divine only so far as it could be humanly expressed.

Hence to a classic Greek the thought of God becoming man presented no difficulties. In fact the thought existed. His gods were men already. He had but to emphasise the human side of the transaction, and all that would happen would be that his Pantheon would receive an Apollo the more. So far as the idea of incarnation goes, that would have been in keeping with all his notions of the fitness of things and the proper place of man in the universe. Widely different, however, would be the reception of this doctrine in the East. To an Oriental it would of course have constituted an express recognition of that material state of being, the very idea of which was abhorrent to him. Nature, matter, the world as we see it, the reason and intellect of man which deal with these phenomena, everything in short which is anathema to the East, and the obliteration of which is to the East the first condition of salvation, is by the Incarnation guaranteed and ensured for ever.

In short, though it is true that Christianity contains something of the East and something of the West yet it is very evident that, so long as East remained exclusively East and West exclusively West, neither would have had anything to do with it. It was too material for the East and too spiritual for the West.

For a new thought to take hold the mind of the world must be prepared for it ; that is to say, there must exist predisposing causes and influences leading men in the direction of the new thought, and tending to develop in them the faculties which shall recognise it. The mingling of East and West, of which we have been speaking, was in this sense apparently a necessary preparation for the acceptance of Christianity. Necessarily, considering the limitations of human nature, it had to precede the announcement of the new religion. In effect it is certain, on independent evidence of which the testimony of art forms part, that the decisive change had occurred, or

was in full process of occurring, long before Christianity appeared upon the scene at all, and that it was continued and carried on for several centuries altogether independently of Christianity. If we set aside the Christian religion altogether, we can still watch the mellowing of pagan thought, we can still see it beating against the bars of a too finite intellectualism. We can see, at this crisis of its own discontent and yearning, the East brought into touch and contact with it, and subsequently we can trace the development of systems of philosophy arising naturally out of this fusion and penetrated by that full sense of the spiritual and the infinite which is what makes the difference between mediaeval and classic life.

But if Christianity did not bring about the union of spirit and intellect, it is in a very great degree responsible for the continuance of their union. Circumstances brought the two together, but Christianity has held them together. It held them together owing to the fact that, as has been pointed out, it contained in itself doctrines appropriate to either. It contained a provision, the greatest concession ever made to materialism, which fully justified this human state of being and with it the intellectual faculty in man which controls that state of being. But, on the other hand, it contained another provision which insisted equally inexorably on the transitory nature of all earthly phenomena and on the ultimate and final reality of a purely spiritual existence. So long, therefore, as these doctrines could be maintained inviolate it followed that all Christians must acquiesce in that union of East and West which had originally upheld the imposition of the faith. In other words, they pledged themselves to the equal development of the spiritual and intellectual sides of man's nature which in the old world had been separately cultivated. It was impossible to reject either since both were implicit in accepted religion, yet the effort to reject one or other constitutes henceforth the history of Christianity.

As a matter of fact the result of the opening up

of communication with the East was that the tide of Eastern mysticism flowed so strongly westward that the difficulty was how to restrain and set bounds to its operations. The most dangerous and powerful of the first divisions within the Church sprang, as the reader is aware, from the uncontrollable inclination of the mystical emotional element to sweep away all forms and definitions and resolve religion into abstract rapture. The problem before the Church—for it was the Church which the decline of the Imperial power and the new vitality in spiritual ideas combined to place in a position of authority—was to admit the warming, vitalising influence of Eastern emotionalism while checking its tendency to dissolve constructive forms. Whether the task was a possible one or not, it was not achieved. The ultimate result of the attempts to reconcile the two was to accentuate their division. The East retired upon itself and the old barriers separating it from the West arose once more. It would be idle to speculate on the effects, both on East and West, of the estrangement that followed. How much might the intellectualism of the West have done for the East if the bond had held ; how much might the emotionalism of the East have done for the West ? Does it not seem as if the first split, which threw the East back on emotion only and the West back on reason only, were at the root of most of what is false and ill-balanced in the subsequent life of both ? The heavy weight of Western materialism, the barrenness of Oriental speculation groping in the void—would either have attained the growth they did if the union between thought and emotion had been preserved ? Those terrible early heresies split more than the Church, they split man's life asunder.

I hope the reader will pardon me for dealing so cursorily with such large views, but it is impossible to follow the changes and vagaries of art from the pagan into the modern era unless we take with us a rough idea of the change in mental outlook which was occurring at that

time. The points I wish to emphasise are these. First, that during what is known as the classic epoch, Aryan thought in the West was distinctly intellectual, and that all its operations and effects partook of the clearly defined and firmly outlined character which distinguishes intellectual processes. Second, that there came a time when to this intellectual Western thought was added the spiritual thought of the East, and that henceforth Western thought lost its precision and clearness, and became coloured and suffused with all kinds of mystical divinations, which naturally also took effect in art and all other modes of utterance in which life expresses itself. The third point I have touched upon—that Christianity, by the establishment of a Church pledged to preserve its original doctrines, took it upon itself to perpetuate this interfusion of ideas—is one we shall have to recur to later.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GREEK SCULPTURE

The perfection with which sculpture, the art of definition, expresses Greek ideas. The obvious limitations which Greek sculpture shares with Greek thought. Greek thought sapped by Eastern ideas and the effect of this upon sculpture.

IF, with the ideas just suggested of Greek life and Greek thought in our minds, we turn to Greek art, we shall find that the art so exactly and so evidently bears out and accentuates the life and thought that a laboured comparison may well seem superfluous. Greek art is essentially, as all have recognised, an art of form. It is true the Greeks used colour and used it freely, but they invariably conceived of colour as a merely descriptive agent and as strictly subordinate to the requirements of form. Colour used in this manner is, of course, form's most able lieutenant. Colour one object blue and another red and the eye distinguishes at a glance the limits of either ; or relieve a blue pattern on a red background and immediately it shows up with the same distinctness. All people, therefore, who have a true instinct for form, and whose impulse it is to articulate form vividly, will assuredly use colour freely in this way, as an attribute of form and a means of defining it. But they never will use it emotionally, or permit it for a moment to pass under the control of that powerful and dangerous enemy of form, *chiaroscuro*, in whose hands it may indeed develop a more sensuous and emotionally enriched capacity of its own,



but at the expense of the clear thought which form is able to communicate.

It was thus that the Greeks used colour. They used it in their architecture to differentiate between the various clear-cut members of the structure, and in this way they threw up into heightened relief the delicate and pure outline of every salient moulding. They used it with graphic effect on their pottery, and it is indeed remarkable how, even in the rude age of the art, before form itself had attained to anything like its full measure of varied expressiveness, the use and value of colour as a means of articulation was instinctively divined. Whether drawn in white upon a dark ground, or in red or brown upon a light ground, the power of a sharp contrast is equally in the artist's mind. The folds of a black garment are defined in threadlike lines of a paler tint, and each most minute detail, of which there are never sufficient to impair the legibility of the design, is shown, with an almost sparkling clearness, by the firmness with which its own colour is limited by its dimensions. This use of colour is a Greek tradition. Precisely the same rule holds with regard to the Pompeian decorations of Graeco-Roman art. In these, too, the sense for form is delicate and sensitive to an unusual degree, and the use of colour is strictly limited to the articulation of form.

In nothing is the innate tendency and bias of the Greek mind towards distinct and concrete modes of articulation more apparent than in the place which sculpture occupied in the public esteem. The Greek people, it may be said, lisped in sculpture. It was the popular and universal art. "The multitude of votive offerings which filled the local shrines of Greece, Cyprus, or Rhodes, and for the most part took the form of statues and statuettes, in which, rude as they are, Professor Gardner already remarks the characteristic Greek tendency towards anthropomorphism, attest by their numbers the popularity of the art in its primitive stage of development." But most clearly perhaps does the character of the Greek

intelligence show itself in the treatment which Greek sculpture accords to subjects which, in their own nature, are more or less involved in mystery, to such subjects as divinity, death, and the attributes and ideas of spiritual existence.

Those who possess within themselves the faculty which, after its own fashion, divines and dimly apprehends the nature of the spiritual, must always distrust and always be on their guard against the merely humanly intelligible interpretation of those subjects which intellect affords. Thus the Eastern philosophy, which in its essence is purely spiritual, is, as has been pointed out, constantly on the watch against any kind of definition designed to adapt its idea to the human understanding, and by so doing to mutilate, as was very clearly seen, its own spiritual nature. Nothing positive was ever permitted to be spoken of spiritual being. No specification, however subtle, could really grasp and enclose it. "It is not so," is always the final comment. That impalpable essence could be curtailed to none of the forms or formulas of mortal speech or mortal art. "The âtman is silence."

The same caution reveals itself wherever a spiritual idea is present. The Jewish imagination, inspired by its own high conception of a supreme Divinity, was in perpetual alarm lest this conception should be frittered away by adaptation of it to human intelligence. To guard against this danger the practice of formulating or defining was solemnly banned, and the prohibition "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image" was promulgated as a divine ordinance. Similarly, after East and West had split asunder, the determined and bitter iconoclastic agitation, which raised the destruction of images to a dogma of the faith, reproduced and re-applied what had ever been an essential attribute of the Eastern point of view.

Turning once more to Greek sculpture, it is at once apparent that no misgivings of this nature affected the Greek imagination. The Greeks were never troubled

by the thought that the images which the human intellect could conceive and fashion of divinity were inadequate or inappropriate. If we did not know already that they regarded their gods and goddesses merely as glorified men and women, and were perfectly satisfied with the reports of them which human reason and human experience could suggest, we should be made aware of the fact by contemplating their statues. In the firm outlines and accurate proportions of these marble figures is no least hint of uncertainty, or the slightest intimation that there existed in the artist's mind the least intuition of his subject which his chisel could not precisely define. There is perhaps no better way, for one who would really grasp the Greek point of view, to attain his object, than by meditatively contemplating the sculptured representations of the Greek divinities. The human, the material, aspect of the undertaking, which is bound by the very nature of art to claim its share in all such enterprises, in these cases claims the absolute control and direction of the work. Take away what is human and material and leave only what is spiritual, and you have taken away everything and left nothing. Let the reader think himself into the position of men to whose spiritual needs these representations respond and are sufficient. What now is his state of mind? He is one to whom the idea of divinity suggests nothing more than reason and the experience a man may gather in the world can pronounce upon and appraise. Of that kind of spiritual vision which belongs to the spiritual faculty and which, blurred and uncertain as it is, possesses so strange a power of transforming the value of earthly objects and earthly estimates, there is here not a trace. "Speak not to me comfortably of death, great Odysseus," says the shade of Achilles; "I would rather be a serf bound to the soil, the hireling of a man with little land or wealth, than bear sway over all the departed." Beyond this human life, this life of natural law and reason, the Greek could not penetrate. He had not the faculty which could give him

glimpses of any other condition of being or any other degree of knowledge. He had rather be a slave here, here where he shone so, than reign in that other kingdom which was never more to him than "the Shades."

The same limitation is apparent in another field of Greek sculpture, that which commemorates the dead. No one passing down the Street of Tombs at Athens, or reviewing any collection of sepulchral figures, would guess, were it not for the inscriptions, that the sculpture had anything to do with death. The action depicted is usually one of a quite ordinary and everyday character. There are no recumbent figures with eyes closed and hands clasped. The departed one is represented as engaged on some usual household occupation, or talking to a friend, or tying up her hair. The nearest suggestion of the forbidden subject I recollect is a grave hand-clasp, which seems to presage a long separation. Thus far the Greek goes, but no farther.

Death is both a plain fact and a mystery. To die is to go hence ; it is to say good-bye finally and once for all. These are the obvious, this-side-of-the-grave facts about it. But what about the other side ? What awakening perhaps awaits it ? What kind of experiences, incomprehensible to our finite senses, will it encounter ? Most races have hankered after answers to these questions, and in treating of Death have suggested certain solutions. Some show the departed soul, encountered by the gods and goddesses of the next world, being crowned with wreaths and offered refreshments, as after an arduous journey, or being introduced, with heavenly courtesy, to the occupants of celestial halls. Sometimes the carving of skulls and cross-bones suggests the contempt in which this mortal state should be held, while one of the most touching and usual mediaeval designs represents two angels, one at the head and one at the foot of the bier, drawing back the curtain from the recumbent figure, as though the moment of awakening had arrived.

The Greeks knew nothing of all this. They had no wish to pry into the beyond. They carved no angels. The spiritual side of the mystery did not appeal to them. This is their limitation. At the end of the human tether they stop dead. They walk straight and firmly up to the door of the sepulchre, but they never roll away the stone. Yet within their limits how perfect and complete do they appear! Consider their dignity, their composure, their serenity even in face of the awful mystery of death. Here are no tears, no howls, no wringing of hands and tearing of hair :

They nothing common did, nor mean,  
Upon that memorable scene.

The power they had trusted all along upheld them here. In death as in life reason is their stay. To bear the inevitable with fortitude and composure should be the aim of a rational being. If there is nothing here beyond reason, the reason is of the noblest and loftiest quality.

Greek sculpture, then, does not attain to any purely spiritual significance ; that has to be cancelled. But it does attain to the expression of a very noble ideal with marked and well-defined ethical characteristics. All the figures of Greek sculpture of the prime, the figures of gods and the figures of men and women, testify to this ideal either by attaining or by aiming at it ; and this ideal, like all reason's products, is intelligible and consistent and can immediately be recognised. It is in fact the same ideal as is indicated by Greek philosophy, Greek thought, Greek poetry. Harmonious proportion, perfect symmetry, and that lofty unity of character which arises from the due relation of the parts to the whole and is the expression of the control of a central, clear-seeing intelligence—these are the leading traits of the Greek ideal character as drawn by Greek thought. Out of Greek poetry and philosophy and oratory, and all such hints and sidelights as seem to



cast light on the subject, carve for yourself the figure of the perfect Greek as Greek thought conceived him ; and then, with that image in your mind, turn your gaze upon Greek sculpture. Is not the image come to life ? Is not the thought with which the poets and philosophers are struggling the very thought also with which the sculptors are struggling ?

Here it is we touch the secret of the profound attraction which the art of sculpture exercised over the Greek mind. Veil the truth as we will it remains a truth, that the art of man has made visible nothing save what the mind of man has believed in. The Greeks were enamoured of sculpture because it represented to them in terms of form that which they all aspired to be. The virtues which seemed to them highest, the temperament which seemed most worthy of a man, were the virtues and the temperament which their sculpture incarnated. Hence the ennobling influence of the art and its essentially, in Greek eyes, religious character. It was a constant incentive and exhortation to the Greeks to realise their own ideal. What these things were they themselves would fain be if they could. So that marble and bronze joined with poetry and philosophy in leading the race on to the attainment of the same goal. All were agents in the same endeavour. Poetry and philosophy recommended the ideal to the mind, while art recommended it to the eye.

But at the same time it is important to notice that sculpture could only do this for the Greeks on the condition that their ideas never outran its own possibilities. Greek ideas, being always intellectual, are always definite, always clear-cut. That is what fits them so well for sculpture. They are already a sort of sculpture. As ideas they have all the qualities of exact form. Even the moral and ethical ideas which inspired the Greek ideal were of this character. They were intellect's highest, but they were purely intellectual still. No tinge of mystery clung about them. They could give a clear account of themselves. They could conform to

the conditions of sculpture. They could express themselves in terms of form. Hence the moment of the Greek prime, when the Greek intellect, fully developed, fully in command of life, was yet untried and untroubled by any surmises or intuitions from another source, was the moment when the art of sculpture, fully charged with the meaning it could best express, seemed to reach a perfection and a completeness which it has never before or since attained.

This happy state of things for sculpture, however, lasted only so long as Greek intellectualism remained unruffled and sufficient for itself. The day came when this intellectual self-sufficiency could no longer maintain itself, when it was obliged to give ground to a sense of spiritual unrest and anxiety not in keeping with the full meaning of the word classic, and not in keeping with Greek life at its most typical moment. It is in this respect, some critics tell us, that Euripides, born 480 B.C., differs from Sophocles, who was fifteen years his senior; the latter being pure Greek while the former is touched already with a breath of the coming change. But in any case the following century saw the Hellenistic movement in full swing, while the conquests of Alexander in that century opened a breach through which the spiritual ideas of the East flooded steadily Westward. The two causes to be borne in mind in considering the Hellenistic movement have been touched upon. They are, first, the wearing out of the intellectual habit of thought which had given its character to the classic epoch, and, second, the opening up, by the Eastern penetration, of just the order of ideas which the Greek mind was beginning to feel the lack of. If we were able to trace the hidden and subconscious impulses which move human nature, it is probable we should find that the adventure of Alexander was the outcome of some inward discontent and sense of insufficiency of the prevailing cast of thought of the West, and of a restless hunger and craving for what only the East could supply.

It is at any rate important to notice that intellectualism had worked itself out in the West, and had by its own efforts reached the point where the spiritual contribution was necessary to its own further progress, before the secrets of Oriental philosophy were divulged to it.

What now is the general character of the sculpture of this later, Hellenistic, period? It is marked by a rapid relaxation of the hitherto existing rules and principles of the art, and the introduction of a style more emotional, romantic, and experimental in motive than the pure classic epoch would have tolerated. Furtwängler and Ulrichs, in accounting for this change, lay stress on the cosmopolitan nature of an art of which the centres were the new cities and settlements of the East—Seleucia, Antioch, Rhodes, Pergamos, Alexandria—rather than, as heretofore, Greece itself, and particularly Athens. They dwell upon “the effective realism and dramatic depth” of scenes and figures which “seize and stir the nerves of the spectator.” Full of this spirit of emotion is what they consider the most important work of the period, the famous Nike of Samothrace. “On the prow of a ship the tall slender goddess shares the tumult of the sea-battle, and announces the victory with a blast of the trumpet, which only stirs the fighters to a more passionate and battle-thirsty mood.” Of the same emotional order of art is the head in the Brussels museum, which represents a fallen barbarian who, with a last effort, still struggles to advance. “His expression is full of energy, combined with the painful consciousness of defeat. The expression of the eyes is wonderfully telling, his wide-open mouth shows the upper teeth, his forehead is contracted over the eyes.” Whether or not this is a correct interpretation of what the sculptor meant to express, it is at least certain that what he was chiefly concerned and interested in was in experimenting in the capacity for emotional expression latent in the human countenance. This is a marked peculiarity of the Hellenistic style and the first to strike the attention

of a spectator. Every kind of expression is essayed, but chiefly those which convey longing and doubt and stormy trouble of soul. The passing from the sternly serene figures of the classic age into this prevailing state of mental agitation is like passing from harboured waters into the broken and turbulent surf of the outer sea. The reader is sure to be struck by the modern appearance and character of many of these later Greek sculptures, and indeed it is remarkable that all the examples which, in the days before the classic ideal was correctly appreciated, were instinctively seized upon by northern Europe as examples of the Greek prime, such as the Laocoön, the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus de' Medici, and the Dying Gaul, were of the later and more consciously emotional period which so much more nearly approximates to our own point of view.

But though the character of Hellenistic art and the contrast between it and Hellenic art are not difficult to seize, yet I cannot find among critics any satisfactory account of the influences which led to the new development. Stress is laid, no doubt, on the rise of the Eastern cities, but there is no apparent reason on the face of things why a Greek of Alexandria or Pergamos should not adopt the same standpoint and the same artistic ideals as a Greek of Athens. Mr. Short is satisfied with arguing that "the old civic pride which had found vent in the Parthenon marble was impossible in the Seleucidian empire. A vigorous political life was out of the question in the semi-oriental kingdom." But this does not quite meet the difficulty. A vigorous civic pride may induce to artistic activity, but as a matter of fact the Hellenistic cities were as actively creative as the Hellenic. What we have to explain is a change in the inward spirit and character of art, and this the "civic pride" argument does not elucidate. Civic pride and a vigorous political life were as much and more the characteristics of mediaeval French and English communes as of classic Greek cities, and they did equally result in a very marked creative



activity, but so far from the mediaeval style of art resembling Hellenic, it much more closely resembled the art of the Hellenistic age in which, as we are assured, civic pride had ceased to exist. Can it really be affirmed that there is anything more popular, more democratic, more smacking of the ideas of citizenship in the composed and almost cold figures of the great age than in such more emotional and more vividly dramatic conceptions as the Dying Gaul and the Laocoön ?

The truth is that what we must look out for is an inward mental change corresponding to the outward visible change. It has been pointed out that the earlier sculpture, the purely classic sculpture, was the characteristic expression of the one really great element in classic culture, its high and serene intellectualism. Greek sculpture of the prime is inspired by the same ideas and principles as Greek thought of the prime. It is the embodiment of a national ideal. It cannot be too often repeated or too steadily borne in mind that the very principles which the Greeks aspired to live by, and frame their conduct on, are principles which can be immediately, and without any change whatsoever, applied to art. The watchwords which were always in the mouths of Greek thinkers—unity, symmetry, proportion, and the like—were directly relevant to the arts of form, and have been, indeed, always used as a critical standard especially bearing on Greek art. This is why Greek art bore the character it did, not because civic pride or politics were particularly concerned in it, but because the intellectual gospel which the Greeks intensely believed in had incarnated itself in these visible forms and proportions.

Having then realised what that particular style of sculpture stood for, when the sculpture goes we shall know that the predisposing cause must also have gone. The predisposing cause in this case was an ethical system, so purely intellectual and precisely defined that it could be translated just as it was into terms of form. It was the change in this ethical system which broke up classic



art. Classic art lasted so long as the great thought which classicalism had brought into the world—the thought of intellectual self-sufficiency—lasted. It passed when the thought passed. What is seen in the troubled and broken experiments of the Hellenistic style is the passing of that thought. That thought, of intellect's sufficiency, is breaking down, can no longer maintain itself, serves no longer as an inspiration for art. It is not that men carve at Antioch, or Rhodes, or elsewhere. It is not where they carve that matters, but what thought they have it in their minds to express. That thought is not yet clear; but this at least is clear, that they will no longer proclaim the sufficiency of an intellectual code of ethics. They will no longer assert that an accurately-thought-out line of conduct and ideas contains the gospel of life.

So they break from the old classic tradition, signalling in the act the downfall of what is still the most precious attribute in classic culture. They went their ways, and it is not in the confusion which ensues easy to distinguish a positive aim. But at least something like a common tendency or bias is discernible. The most notable characteristic of the new style is, as I have said, its predisposition towards what is emotional and its hankering after exhibitions of strong feeling, physical, mental, and spiritual. This is the trait which is positive in Hellenistic art, and which shows that it is not merely a revolt against an order of ideas no longer believed in, but that it is inspired by an order of ideas of its own. It is seeking to contribute something which the old classic style lacked. The emotional and spiritual impulses which the classic age so sternly disavowed, the seeking after unknown things, the groping in the void, the anxiety and the perturbation of soul which the classic mind above all things reprehended, are now the constant subjects of speculation and themes of art. It is the moment when the intermingling of Eastern and Western ideas, which was permanently to change the character and thoughts of humanity, is first apparent in its visible effects.

## CHAPTER IX

### GREEK ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is in particular the art in which the Greeks endeavoured to embody their system of thought-out and reasoned ethics. Among the Greeks the ethical principles of thought and philosophy were applied without change to the sphere of art. It was this which permitted art to give a perfect rendering of the Greek ideal.

THE reader will remember that in an earlier chapter we pointed out the difference between the interior and exterior points of view. We imagined ourselves gazing into the depths of the sea or at the objects along the shore, and again we imagined ourselves contemplating the colours of an autumn beech-wood or looking out from its edge at the individual features of the landscape. The change from one point of view to the other, we said, was a change of mind, a change of mood. One set of faculties, the intellectual faculties, were roused to deal with the objects of the exterior view, while another set of faculties, the emotional faculties, were roused to deal with the interior scene.

Doric and Byzantine architecture are perfectly typical of this difference. In the account given of Byzantine architecture nothing was said about its exterior aspect ; the description was wholly of its interior effect. Such a treatment was reasonable ; for there is no such thing really as a Byzantine exterior ; that is to say, the style has defined no specific mode of external construction. Its marble panelling and arcades and coloured disks were reserved especially for the walls of palaces, but the

great churches of the style have little that is characteristic in their outward view. When the Venetians, in their opulence, desired to enrich the exterior of St. Mark's they were driven, so destitute was the style they were dealing with of any notion of outside treatment, to Gothic or even Moorish sources to help themselves out. Even that most striking architectural feature, the dome, never seems to have been treated by Byzantine architects with the least regard to its external appearance. Taking the Byzantine churches of Constantinople, Greece, Italy, and Sicily which the present writer has seen, together with those of Asia Minor of which he has seen illustrations, he is quite unable, from the general survey, to divine from their outside view any points of agreement or any common aim. Often they are mere bald, square, almost windowless boxes of brick masonry, with a low irrelevant dome rising timidly over the top. Almost invariably they have a raw and unfinished air, as if the builders had knocked off work before completing their task. St. Sophia from the outside suggests a circus or a soap factory, so entirely free is its jumble of brick walls from any apparent architectural intention. Londoners have been made to suffer quite recently for this limitation in Byzantine art. The architect of Westminster Cathedral, so long as he was dealing with the inside of the church, could proceed with confidence, but externally he had nothing to guide him, and the result has been what we see.

But if Byzantine architecture has no outside, Doric architecture has no inside. It is meant simply to be looked at. There was, of course, the cella, the enclosure within the peristyle containing the image of the deity to whom the temple was dedicated, but this scarcely forms part of the architectural effect of the building. It was of inconsiderable size, apparently ill lit, and it seems doubtful if it was ever used for purposes of public worship. Mr. Simpson observes that the interior of even the largest Greek temple was so small (about the size of an ordinary English parish church), that it could not possibly have

accommodated the people who, on days of high festival, came to participate in the celebrations. These took place outside, round the altar in the courtyard, the entrance doors of the temple being thrown open to allow as many people as possible to see the shrine within. "Thus even in the act of worship the crowd was excluded."

This curious lack of interior space and exclusion of the people from the mysteries and emotions of worship must appear to us strange and unnatural; but we must remember that it did not suit the cast of the Greek mind to press enquiry beyond a certain point. The clear definition of certain intelligible ideas, which the architecture in its form and proportions embodied, was all that the Greek desired. That appeal was addressed to his understanding, the only faculty which he valued in himself. He had no desire to pass on, to penetrate to the interior view, to drug himself (as he would have put it) with spiritual aspirations or steep his soul in the syrup of Eastern mysticism. The clear, distinct, essentially virile, *looking at* point of view was an essential characteristic of the Greek mind, and was indeed the basis of the classic order of civilisation.

Its first effects are to be seen in the choice of the temple site. We, when we use the word site, commonly have in our minds a position favourable for seeing from, not a position favourable for looking at. The words "a beautiful site" conjure up an idea of a house well situated, from which we can command lovely views and prospects of the surrounding scenery. To the Greeks the phrase meant something quite different. It meant, not a point from which the surrounding country might be seen, but a point which the surrounding country could see. And the use made of the phrase was in accordance with this definition, for such a place, in Greek hands, was appropriated, not to the private uses of magnates and millionaires, but to some national shrine or temple in which the whole community was interested.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance and

dignity conferred, even now in their decay, on the remnants of Greek architecture by this method of placing. The blurred impressions we receive from Nature are condensed and accentuated by art. The ordinary landscape, with distinct objects raised in relief, does indeed appeal to the mind, to intellect, to thought ; yet all this is vague ; these intellectual suggestions wander over the prospect, but it is difficult to grasp them, difficult to bring them to a head. It needs some masterpiece of art, as a temple rightly placed, to focus them. It is the general character of the regard which we cast upon a view, its readiness to observe and report things of meaning, which makes the appeal of the temple irresistible. The building sums up a mood. The eye fixes on it with a delight that has in it the feeling of a solution. It satisfies the mental expectation which every more or less imperfectly articulated form in the landscape has roused yet failed to satisfy.

All detached pieces of architecture, isolated in the general view, have this interest and power of attraction, but the Greek temples possess it to a singular extent. It often seems as if Nature herself had arranged her own geography with a view to their convenience, and, in the modelling of her hills and valleys, been guided by the purpose of affording to these ideal constructions the most advantageous positions possible. Standing as they do they appear to preside over the scenery, the irregular and wild beauty of which finds in these ordered and stately structures an otherwise unuttered climax of expression. The site is part of the temple's influence, and the two remain inseparable in memory. Segesta stands in the midst of gaunt and barren hills. A long walk from the nearest railway station leads over these hills, and coming round the shoulder of the last range a view is disclosed of a long valley stretching in among the mountains that enclose it and tower above it on either hand. From the side of one of the main ridges a short spur is thrust forward into the valley, the end of which



forms a rounded knoll, and on this the temple is placed. With the large mountains bent round it and the valley leading up to it, it forms a natural cynosure and attracts the eye from a great distance. No trace remains of the classic city save this one building. The landscape is an extraordinarily wild and lonely one, the only sign of life being an occasional shepherd boy climbing with his goats among the rocks and tufts of asphodel. Nevertheless the temple, raised upon its natural pedestal, still dominates the landscape, and claims a silent homage from the surrounding scenery.

And yet more effective even than Segesta is the row of temples at Girgenti, standing along the cliff overlooking the sea. Inland the ground dips into a wide hollow before sloping up steeply to the heights which once carried the ancient city of Agrigentum, and this hollow, facing south and sheltered from the north, teems with a vegetation which in April and May seems to combine the prodigal richness of a tropical climate with the vigour and freshness of northern seasons. The delicious green of the young almond trees, the almost transparent leaves and tendrils of the vines, the black, massive carob trees, the glistening foliage and glowing fruit of the orange and lemon groves form a thicket of the utmost luxuriance and variety, to which gigantic olives, locally reputed to be survivals from the Greek age, add the soft grey of their foliage and the strength of their gnarled trunks. Great trailing gourds cumber the earth or climb the trees, whence they hang down their flaccid yellow blossoms. The air is fragrant with the scent of orange blossom, and an endless variety of wild flowers twinkle through the young wheat which covers the ground.

This sheltered valley, nourished by its rich volcanic soil and breathed on by warm sea breezes, strikes one as the spoiled child and petted darling of Nature. There appears, as you wander through the enchanted covert, nothing lacking to complete its beauty, until through

gaps in the foliage, between orange groves and olives, you catch a glimpse of the long dark-brown ridge of the cliff, and, close in front, the easternmost of the temples, Juno Lacinia, lifting its level architraves against the clear blue of the sky. But no sooner do these constructions appear than the scene of enchantment you have passed through becomes, as it were, an accessory to the superior significance of the objects now disclosed, its purpose being merely to lead up to the stately row of buildings ranged along the cliff, visible alike in salient relief from the city and from the sea.

It is unnecessary to multiply instances of this care of the Greeks in the choice of sites. The most famous example, as the reader knows, is the Acropolis at Athens, an eminence of precisely the right height and dimensions, rising sharply from the plain and commanding the attention not only of the town and its environs, but of the encircling mountains, of the fertile valley leading to the Piraeus, and of the blue expanse of the Gulf of Aegina ruffled in old days by the Athenian fleets. So perfectly adapted is this feature for the purpose for which it has been used that I have sometimes wondered if the position of the hill had not something to do with the choice of the position for the city, which seems to have drawn hither from its more natural site near the Piraeus, in order that it might take advantage of such an opportunity for the proper display of its precious works of art.

However that may be, it is evident that in the placing of their temples the Greeks were only carrying out to its logical conclusion the same principles which they constantly applied to the detail of their architecture. They were but reiterating their guiding maxim that *every touch must tell*, that, as the disposition of every part must be regulated by a strict regard for its easy and perfect display, so the disposition of the whole must be guided by the same consideration. What a single metope was to the frieze, what the frieze was to the entire entablature, what the entablature was to the whole temple, that the

temple itself was to the landscape. The conception was altogether a Greek one. With seven hills to choose from the Romans stuffed all their chief buildings into a ditch.

Such was the Greek idea of a site. It is an idea of course exclusively applicable to the external style of architecture, to a style, that is, of which the whole virtue consisted in its aspect. Those who asked of architecture the representation of an interior mood of contemplation and prayer might obtain their appropriate site in the thronged streets and alleys of a city. Better for them, since the building must be entered ere its best influence could be felt, that it should be in the midst of dwellings than set apart upon a hill. As a rule Christian churches follow this impulse. To be accessible is their chief care ; to mingle among the lives of the poor, just as the religion they embody should mingle, is their endeavour. Were you to tell a Christian builder that the chief merit and capacity for good of his temple consisted in its outward aspect, that far more important than its call to prayer, its provision for meditation, the sacred music of its choir, and the serious exhortations of its pulpit, were the visible and tangible proportions and calculated symmetry of its structural forms—were you to tell him this you would appear to him little other than an idiot or a blasphemer. He would suggest that to make such a claim was in itself a proof of intellectual arrogance and pride amounting to a repudiation of the whole teaching of Christianity.

And, speaking from the Christian point of view, he would be right, for Christianity is itself essentially emotional, and therefore of the interior order. But he would not be right from the pagan point of view, for paganism was essentially intellectual, and therefore of the exterior order. It is, I think, Ruskin who points out how lovely is the spectacle of a Christian church rising out of the midst of the hovels of the people, which cluster round it and seem to lean against it for support. We

should like to hear a Greek's remarks on the suggestion that his temple might be similarly adorned. His language, we take it, would at least equal in force that of the Christian builder when invited to substitute structural proportion for the purposes of prayer. The truth is the two points of view are separated by so profound a chasm that they cannot understand each other. The Christian has come to rely so much upon a spiritual source of edification that he cannot understand what intellectual edification means ; while the Greek relies so much upon intellectual edification that he cannot understand what spiritual edification means. "What," the first would ask, "are these cold calculations of reason to me? Do they speak to the soul? Do they, temporal as they are and bounded by our earthly state, open up to my spiritual vision the vistas of eternity and suffuse my being with a consciousness of spiritual life?" "No," the other would reply, "they undertake to perform no such tricks. There is no mystery about my art, and my temples shelter no god that can do for a man more than a man can do for himself. But if you would lead in the noblest sense a rational life, if in this human state you would conform to the dictates of the highest human faculty, then study and observe well the proportions of our temples and the pose of our statues, for nothing more than these will help you to realise the beauty of the ideal which you pursue."

The best of which paganism was mentally capable—its intellectual lucidity and disinterestedness, traits still perpetuated in the meaning we give to the word classic as applied to literature—was perfectly embodied in Greek art. It is important that we should make an effort to realise—for we need to make the effort, the idea being naturally foreign to us—that the sanctity of influence which the Greeks attributed to noble architecture was something totally different from the sanctity of influence which we attribute to it. Could we conduct a Greek of the classic meridian into the solemn interior; darkened with shadow and enriched with colour, of a Byzantine



or Gothic church, it is certain that, so far from being impressed, or so far from acknowledging the appeal to his aesthetic sense of beauty, he would shrink with aversion from so intimate and powerful an advocacy of all those vague, indefinite, emotional impulses which it was in part the purpose of all his philosophy to withstand. "Get thee behind me, Satan," he would exclaim, conscious of the intoxicating effect of their dangerous eloquence. He would rush forth, as one flying from evil spirits. "Give me back," he would cry, "the art that was my own, the art that incarnated the thoughts I held of most value, the art of pure form and perfect proportion, which sustained and calmed and upheld me by presenting to my eyes the very aspect and image of the intellectual ideal I was striving after."

Such would have been his prayer. The beauty, the precious and valuable quality in his architecture, that for which he laboured so patiently and so long, was simply the look of it. It was the actual arrangement of the marble blocks of column and entablature that took effect, that preached, that edified. What was it they preached, what was the message, the exhortation, they delivered, and to which the Greeks were never tired of attending. They preached precisely what Greek sculpture had preached; they preached the value, the beauty of those ethical ideas which Greek thought had singled out as guides to human conduct. That sense of proportion, of symmetry, that steadfast reference of all details and every day of life to the realisation of a perfect whole, the calmness and serenity of self-knowledge, the unity which is the result of the action of a central intelligence directing every part to one common climax, all these traits and qualities which are the guiding traits and qualities of Greek philosophy, and which the whole Greek race, each individual according to the measure of his intelligence, may be said to have been aiming at and endeavouring to realise as a matter of conduct and character, are also the traits and qualities inherent in the only style of archi-



ture which is intimately associated with the Greek genius.

While we survey and ponder, therefore, the aspect of a Doric temple we must all the while bear in mind this essential fact in regard to it—the fact that it is an embodiment of the Greek religion of intellectualism. This is the key to its interpretation. There is nothing in the temple that is not explained by reference to the idea which governs it. In the very method of construction it adopts, the nature of the governing idea is apparent. The Greeks, we are to remember, had a definite message to deliver, which imposed upon them the need of speaking with the utmost possible curtness and precision. Now there is only one mode of construction which can articulate with perfect clearness, and that is the trabeated, or column and lintel, mode. This is the intellectual method of building *par excellence*, and this therefore, by reason of what they had to say, the Greeks were driven to adopt.

We will show the reader in two words in what the intellectual supremacy of the trabeated principle consists. The principle itself begins and ends in uprights stuck in the ground and horizontals laid across them, and any cattle-shed in the corner of a field is constructed on the same lines. Nevertheless in this simplicity lies its intellectual opportunity. It will perhaps be remembered that in an earlier chapter we pointed out that the intellectual character of Western architecture consisted in its recognition of the fact that form in architecture is function, that what each feature is doing, the force it is exerting, the pressure it is resisting, the weight it is supporting, is already its ideal form, which we, according to the measure of our brains, have to turn into its real form. Form, in short, is but the embodiment in visible dimensions of what each structural feature does or is. It is usual to call architecture a study in form and stop there. But to be comprehensible it is necessary to ask the question, "A study in what kind of form?" and to give the answer, "A study in the form of function."

But this being so it is evident that the constructive method employed must admit of a clear definition of function ; that is to say, must admit of the various stresses and forces in operation being separately definable. Not every constructive method possesses this qualification. For instance, the arched method of construction does not possess it. Arcuated constructions, at least in the West, do, no doubt, aim at defining function, but they attain only a moderate degree of success owing to the fact that the arch principle does not distinguish clearly the limits of its own operations. It does not separate support from burden. The arch itself is a mere part of the wall it sustains. Moreover, the pressure exerted by the superincumbent weight is not directly vertical, but is flung off by the arch to right and left, much as the bows of a ship fling off the resisting waves. The pressure is partly downward and partly lateral, and is partly therefore withstood by the columns beneath and partly by the side walls and buttresses without. But how this is done, what relation weights have to support, or where the line between the two is to be drawn are questions which must necessarily remain a mystery. The structural method employed in this case does not itself clearly contrast and distinguish the function of this feature and that, and the consequence is that, functions being more or less indefinite, the forms which embody them are also indefinite in a like degree.

This is where the advantage of such a mode of construction as the column and lintel comes in, for in this case the bearing member, or column, and the weight borne, or lintel, are contrasted in the full degree of vertical and horizontal, or in the full degree, if we like so to put it, of active and passive, the one being an exercise of active strength, the other an exercise of passive weight. Each is so distinct from the other that a glance can distinguish the limits of either. This is an example of clearly articulated function, and it follows, of course, that function being perfectly definite the forms which embody it are definite in a like perfection.

From this it ensues that the latter medium, the medium of column and lintel, is particularly appropriate when the thought which is to inspire the architecture possesses intellectual clearness of articulation. This is what we are always driven back upon, for it is this original thought which chooses the kind of construction answering to its own nature, and sharing in the extent of its own vagueness or clearness. The clear thought leads to the evolution or choice of a clear structural principle, and the choice of a clear structural principle leads to the articulation of exact forms. But the thought is the source. No ethical principle is more often insisted upon by the Greeks than the principle of just proportion. The realisation of the beauty of proportion and the endeavour to achieve it, is at the root of the Greek hatred of all that is excessive or exaggerated, of all that is lopsided or eccentric, of all that, whether through under- or over-development, impairs sane and natural growth. None knew better than they that health consists in the sense of proportion which assures an harmonious culture. This was a corner-stone of their ethical system, but there is no spiritual vagueness about it whatever. It is an intellectual truth which requires definite handling. It is, in fact, a truth which can admirably express itself by means of the trabeated principle, but which cannot at all adequately express itself by means of the arcuated principle.

How purely intellectual the Greek aesthetic sense, or feeling for beauty, was is perhaps best shown by a consideration of those slight and imperceptible refinements which constitute the mystery of Greek architecture. The subject is a complicated one and demands a separate volume for its adequate treatment. It will be sufficient here to indicate the general character of these refinements, and for that purpose the best feature to select perhaps is the shaft. The height of the Parthenon shafts is about 34 feet 3 inches, their diameter at the base being 6 feet 3 inches, and at the summit 4 feet 10 inches. These

measurements are approximate only, for they are all liable to a slight variation, the columns being not all exactly the same height nor exactly of the same size. The first inflection I wish to call attention to is their *entasis* or curvature. In its ascent, it will be seen, the column tapers considerably, the top diameter being 17 inches less than the bottom. But the reduction is not effected by a straight slant. The lines of the sides do not lie evenly between their extreme points, but are very slightly rounded or curved. In the case of the Parthenon the curve at its greatest amounts to  $\frac{1}{5\frac{1}{2}}$  of the height of the column, or approximately to three-quarters of an inch. It will seem to the reader that so minute an inflection applied to so large a bulk of masonry, being in itself practically imperceptible, must argue an extraordinary fastidiousness and delicacy of vision in the Greek race. Yet though the presence of the curve is not directly noticeable its absence would be felt at once. It corrects the meagre and skinny appearance which a straight-sided column would have; at the same time it is not pronounced enough to call attention to itself, and unless the column were subjected to exact measurements its presence would remain unsuspected.

But as yet we are only at the beginning of this mystery. This practically invisible curve is itself subject to an inflection. It is not a plain curve, or segment of a very large circle, but is given the outline known as a hyperbola. For some distance from the summit of the column the deviation from the straight is imperceptible; it then *émerges* more boldly, and at a distance of one-third of the column's height from the ground attains its maximum deviation of three-quarters of an inch, from which point it diminishes again towards the base.

I beg the reader to pause here and consider this curious feature until he has grasped its character. The column's height is over 34 feet. The curvature, or bulge, to be applied to it amounts only to three-quarters of an inch. Yet this wonderfully delicate addition itself



receives a yet more delicate and subtle inflection, imparting finally to the column a pear-shaped form, the upper portion shooting up out of a thickened lower portion. The entire deviation is worked out in invisible dimensions. When it is further considered how great must have been the labour and pains and skill involved in the cutting of each marble drum to the shape required by a design of such subtlety, we may form some idea of the very high value which the Greeks attached to the refining process.

But in what does that value consist? The very word "refine" implies, not so much an original creation as an enhancement of an already existing factor. Doric refinements are an enhancement of a Western law of art. They do not originate any motives of their own, but add a keener edge of expression to forces already in operation. It will be observed that the Western law as we have hitherto defined it—the law that form is function—is no more than an engineering or mechanical proposition. It affords a standard of perfect utility and honesty of construction, and it necessitates an accurate knowledge of the forces at work. If these practical and material considerations constitute the basis of all good architecture and are a prime test of its quality, it is because architecture itself is so very largely a practical and material business. Nevertheless it is not entirely practical and material. Mere mechanical excellence though it is its alpha is not quite its omega. In Greek work art takes the matter up where mechanics laid it down. Mechanics superintended the construction and, within narrow limits, the form of each structural feature. It ensured the business-like efficiency and simplicity of the building, the clear-cut, accurate shape of its parts, and its entire freedom from irrelevant additions or enrichments. Then came the artist. But he did not go off into any independent fantasticalities of his own, or arrogate to himself a superior knowledge and ideas different from those of ordinary people, or pretend that



“art” was a highly specialised subject not responsible to the ordinary laws of life. He endorsed all that the engineer had done; more than that, he found his own inspiration in what the engineer had done. The temple itself—its structural necessities, its mechanical fitness—was his law too, was indeed his law even more than the engineer’s. Only he would affirm, not only that each feature must be mechanically efficient, but that each feature should so express its efficiency and seem so visibly endowed with it as to appear to take actually a living and conscious part in the whole design.

Thus the trifling and minute entasis, or swelling of the column, which we have been considering, adds nothing to the column’s mechanical efficiency, but it makes that efficiency evident, it draws it out and gives it expression. To this is due that aspect of vigorous and elastic strength which the columns possess, and which has so often attracted the admiration of critics. You would say that they put forth their strength consciously. Not only does their function dictate their form, but it is turned into a living motive, the form of the column being actually animated with the intention of fulfilling the duty allotted to it.

And so with other matters. The platform on which the temple stands would serve as well if it were perfectly flat. But the artist has added, here too, a slight convex curvature of, in the case of the Parthenon, about 3 inches in the front in a width of 101 feet, and about 4 inches on the side in a length of 228 feet. Flat it would have been unrelated to the temple and unaware of what it was itself doing, but its slightly rounded cushion-shape designs it for the burden it is to receive, and seems, as in the case of the columns, to animate it with the consciousness of the purpose for which it was created.

Or, to consider larger and combined features, take the peristyle of shafts which is the main feature of this kind of architecture; obviously if the shafts stood at exactly the same intervals from each other, though they would carry their burden as efficiently as they do now,

yet they would not seem united in the knowledge of what they were doing. The colonnade might extend indefinitely. It would know nothing of its own beginning or ending. As it is it begins with two short steps, the end columns being nearer together than the rest, and, after marching down the flank of the temple, comes to a halt with two more short steps. The consequence is that the colonnade appears to be no mere line of columns cut to the required length, but an entity, an organic feature, designed to its present dimensions and actively co-operating in the scheme of the composition.

This impression, again, is further developed by the slight inward slant imparted to the columns of the peristyle, all the columns leaning inward in such a way as to form the base of an invisible pyramid, which, if the present columns were extended upward, would meet in a point at an immense distance above the centre of the temple. Such an inflection can add nothing to the actual utility of the peristyle, but the impulse to cluster together in the performance of a common task is a motive which, operating upon all the columns, inspires them with a living consciousness of the duty they are performing.

All these expedients are extremely subtle and involve immense labour in their execution. They are also from the practical point of view superfluous. On the other hand they are aesthetically of extraordinary effect, since they ensure that the whole structure, far from being a mere mechanical and lifeless arrangement, shall appear to be a living organism, life being breathed into all its parts by their mutual knowledge of the task in hand. This is the work of the artist, and the reader will see that in each and every case it is but the carrying one step farther of the work of the engineer, and consists but in a further emphasising of the great law that form is function.

I cannot but point out how closely art, in thus relying for effect on the emphasising of a quite common and matter-of-fact motive, resembles the highest literature.

Matthew Arnold, in one of his essays, speaks of the "subtle heightening" in which the accent of great poetry resides, and which is so slight an addition to common speech that it is elusive and almost escapes analysis. Indeed, it is just the greatest of all poetry which seems to be divided from common prose by the narrowest margin. How close to prose is Shakespeare.

He was a man, take him for all in all,  
I shall not look upon his like again.

It is scarcely different from everyday speech, but it is a little different from it. It is separated from everyday speech by just that narrow margin, that subtle and scarcely tangible heightening, in which the accent of the greatest poetry consists. It is strange, but this is what is inimitable. "I shall not look upon his like again," you will say, why, what is there in that? Any one could have written that. No, only one man could have written it. Poetic poetry, poetry which employs the exotic language and images which the conscious cultivation of the art has generated, is imitable. But the poetry which is content imperceptibly to heighten the simplicity and directness of the speech of daily life is beyond the reach of all but the immortals.

The reader will see how close is the analogy between poetry of this order and the architecture we have just been considering. Those elusive and almost indistinguishable curves and inflections which penetrate a Doric temple, and change the most simple and direct construction possible—a construction of which every cattle-shed, as I have said, is an illustration—into noble architecture—what are they but an example, in a sister art, of that "subtle heightening" which turns ordinary speech into noble poetry? Our first instinct in face of such architecture and such poetry is to take it at its face value, to think that because it is simple it is easy. Not until our taste is matured do we attain the knowledge that it is the complicated and elaborate which are easy and the

simple which is difficult. The Greek was content with the simplest structural proposition which exists, a proposition instinctively adopted by every child playing with its wooden bricks. This he selected, and this, by the means we have briefly hinted at, he subtly transfigured, devoting to the process endless labour and thought and generations of delicate experiment, until, out of that foolishly obvious principle, he had fashioned an instrument apt for his needs, an instrument which could express with firm and clear decision the firm and clear ideas of an intellectual philosophy.

I would beg finally the reader to place himself in the position of a citizen dwelling in such a typical Greek town as Agrigentum, and who had, always in full view, the row of temples we have spoken of raised upon their rocky terrace or cliff overlooking the sea to the south. Such a noble and choice position, it need scarcely be said, would, in the case of a modern seaside town, be appropriated by one or two big hotels, or by the more pretentious of the houses of the richest citizens. In the case of the Greek town they were dedicated to the temple, which no other structures were permitted to approach. The evident immense age of the gnarled and hollow olives, which grow in the valley between the cliff and the city, would seem to show that this intermediate space, so lovely in its varied foliage to-day, was not built over in the classic age, but laid out, perhaps, much as at present in plantations and gardens. In any case the line of temples along the sea-cliff would be the most conspicuous objects visible to the inland city. They would stand in a row, at a mile's distance, right across its southern horizon, as though poised and stationed with the calculated object of attracting a constant regard.

To what end, then, was this preparation and careful provision directed? What does the reader, one of the Greek citizens of twenty-five centuries ago, see as he looks out southward at those raised and isolated structures? He sees buildings which fulfil a purpose no living English-



man has ever associated with architecture, buildings which embody in their own proportion his own highest dreams and aspirations, buildings which appeal, not to any superficial sentiment or mere cultivated taste, but which draw him to them by the strong sympathy which attracts like to like. This architecture is no less than a visible manifestation, an actual embodiment in its own proper shape and dimensions, of that ideal being which every Greek would himself be if he could, and which, in so far as he is worthy of the name of Greek, he is ever tending to become.

He has been taught, *you* have been taught, let me rather say to my Greek reader, to have distinct ideas on this all-important subject. You have been taught to carry with you in your mind a reasoned conception of the kind of man you would wish to be. The conception is an intellectual one; that is to say, every trait or attribute it possesses is to be thought and reasoned out, and to be intellectually justified. But you have not been left to your own devices alone to construct this character, this image of what you would be. The whole of your race has helped you. All the finest Greek minds, poets, philosophers, historians, orators, have participated in the task. There have never been any divisions of opinion, or conflict, or wrangling over this business. So long as Greeks have been Greeks this has been the aim of the race, to formulate in ordered sequence the attributes of a perfectly rational character. In truth it is this which makes men Greeks. This is the distinguishing note of the Greek race. You, reader, would not be the Greek you feel yourself to be if you could entertain a thought which was contrary to this high rational endeavour, or which refused to be bounded by the limits it prescribed.

But from the list of your aiders and abettors I have omitted one of the chief. Poets and philosophers, historians and orators have aided and combined in the task of the representation of the Greek ideal character; but more important perhaps than any of these, to a race



of such keen aesthetic susceptibility, has been the aid of the artist. He alone could give visible and tangible form to the idea. He alone could represent and render an abstract vision in concrete terms. He alone could appeal to the sense of sight and bring the testimony of sight, that this is beautiful, to support the evidence of reason, that this is true.

Thus, when you look out from Agrigentum's terraces at the temples along the cliff, what you are looking at is no mere experiment in the art of building. Rather what you are really looking at is *yourself*; only not yourself, as you are, weak and frail, distracted by vain desires, and often false, or half false, to the knowledge within you; but yourself made perfect, the self you are struggling to realise; nay, more than that, the self that your whole nation is struggling to realise. Human nature yearns after the things which further its development, and so do you yearn after those perfect structures in which the precepts of your intellectual faith are incarnated. You have forgone much in restricting yourself to these limits, but at least within these limits all things work in unison. Above all, the relations betwixt life and art are enormously simplified by the ease with which you are able to employ your laws of life as laws of art. Without the least change or modification all those principles inculcated by your philosophers for your guidance in life and conduct are applied by your artists as the guiding principles of art. That harmony and symmetry which your thinkers make so much of, that unity which is their final aim, that stern aversion to frivolous and eccentric motives, and to every feeble or random impulse that might distract attention from the main design—what are all these but the principles by which Doric architecture is governed, and the effects of which it undertakes to render visible in terms of form?

“Thou art the end and realisation of all my endeavours. To be like thee, to attain what thou attainest, and overcome what thou hast overcome has been my desire all

my life long. As I gaze at thee let the beauty of thy perfect shape entice and draw me, so that I too by the same means may attain a similar result. Oh let the craving I have after the virtues of my race be strengthened and purified by thy example, and let my faltering and feeble endeavours take fire from thy steadfast and unwavering pursuit of truth. In thee I see what I would be ; grant me to be that which I see." Such, perhaps, was the prayer, whether spoken or felt, which the Greeks breathed as they contemplated the clustered columns of their temples raised in view of the city and outlined against the sky.

## CHAPTER X

### EAST AND WEST

How the experiences of a traveller bear out the conclusions already arrived at. Oriental life, in all its aspects, its crowds, towns, bazaars, etc., is made up of emotion and colour, while the familiar aspects of Western life are altogether composed of intellectual conceptions and definite forms.

It has been attempted, in the two preceding sections, to describe the essential characteristics and essential differences of Eastern and Western thought as expressed in terms of Eastern and Western art; I should like, however, before passing on, to render the distinction clearer by describing it in terms of actual life. The difference between East and West is not now so radical as in the classic era, yet it remains to this day sufficiently salient to be readily intelligible, and to bear out what has been already written.

The European traveller, as he journeys Eastward, finds himself with the first sight of an Eastern port at the beginning of a totally new experience in life and character. Some inkling of the nature of this experience may occur to him even from the first glimpse of the gay and painted boats, with coloured sails, that dance out to meet the steamer, their swarthy crews laughing, shouting, singing, and quarrelling, each boat a focus of vivid colour and blindly impulsive human emotion, which, discharged on to the deck, becomes a rainbow-tinted, frantically energetic crowd of porters and hotel messengers, who at once dazzle your eyes and threaten to tear you and your luggage to pieces.

All this colour, all this vivacity, are new. And when later you stroll through the narrow labyrinth of native streets, or wander in the covered, dimly-lit bazaars, these same attributes seem to pursue you. Here, too, colour and emotion pervade the scene. Every little tunnel of a shop, stuffed with glowing carpets, or tissues, or gleaming metal, or festoons of yellow and crimson slippers, and disgorging some of its rich contents on to the passage, is a blot of colour ; every figure carries splashes of it in sash and turban ; so that the whole scene and busy crowd are shot with its gleams. Equally, whether gathered into patches or broken up into moving particles among hurrying figures, colour constitutes to the eye the dominating quality of the scene.

But not less present to the mental perception is the human quality of an intense emotional sensibility, an emotional sensibility which manifests itself in countless different, often contradictory, ways and moods and actions, yet invariably, as you watch each individual with intentness, declares itself as the governing impulse in his character.

The Oriental rage, a rage of hissing accents and blazing eyes and wildly tossing limbs and convulsed features, and fangs showing through the drawn-up lips, is not more entirely an affair of emotional sensibility than that passive state of contemplation which an Englishman might perhaps mistake for dulness or lethargy until he observed the quick, stealthy passing of beads through nervous fingers and noticed how clearly the light burns in the dark speculative eyes. It is a state, indeed, as far as possible removed from lethargy, for never is the Oriental more sentient than in these hours when action and thought and conversation are banished that he may enjoy to the full the mere emotional sense of being. Moreover, even those usual passers-by, who walk up and down and exchange greetings and go about the ordinary affairs of life, seem to the eye of our traveller, now grown acute, to be governed by the same kind of emotional

instincts and motives. Their most ordinary movements are strangely inconsequent, and they never seem to be possessed by the same purpose for more than an instant or two at a time. They drift up and down, aimlessly crooning a monotonous chant, or break into sudden fits of gossip and laughter, or stare fixedly at nothing, or stop and sit down, or wander on, all with the impulsiveness of children, and acting evidently on the mere caprice of the moment. Indeed, so soaked are they in impulse and feeling that it is impossible for them to help for an instant giving off that quality, and their gait and attitudes and features and voices and glances all bear witness, sometimes strongly and passionately, sometimes lightly and fitfully, to the emotional sensibility which reigns within.

These two characteristics meet the traveller at the portals of the East and abide with him so long as his stay lasts. Together they make up in main outline the experience to which he looks back. No matter whether his intimacy with Oriental life be long or short, close or casual, it resolves itself at last into these two ingredients. All the dim bazaars he has visited, all the gorgeous garments that have fluttered before his eyes, all the languid, yellow twilights and jungle-tangle of blossom and creeper he has encountered will be summed up for him, and float back upon his memory in a blur of tawny colours ; while all his dealings with men, so puzzling and baffling, all that he has gleaned in knowledge of Oriental customs and manners, all that was typical in their views of conduct and of life, will seem in the same way to emerge from that profound emotional quality which is of the essence of the Oriental temperament. The last impression does but confirm the first. Colour and emotion, he says to himself, as the painted boats and gesticulating crews recede from his departing steamer, colour and emotion make up the East.

But though this may be true, and though colour and emotion do, perhaps, constitute the essentials in the character of Eastern life, its possession of which makes



that life seem strange to us, yet they do not alone comprise the whole difference between East and West. The whole difference between East and West is made up, not only of what the East has which the West lacks, but of what the East lacks which the West possesses. It is not only that our traveller finds himself in the presence of a new interpretation of life, but that he has left behind the interpretation with which he was familiar. The Eastern crowd is odd and strange to him partly because it possesses its own peculiar character of a dreamy or impulsive emotionalism, but partly also because it is wanting in the qualities that make up the character of a Western crowd. Instinctively he contrasts the fitful motions of Orientals with the steady walk and business-like manners of his own countrymen, and the very curtness of the contrast assures him that the West, though it may not have emotional sensibility, has equally definable characteristics of its own.

What is the quality he remembers that reigns in London streets? There is much bustle and movement there, but there is bustle and movement in Eastern streets. Yes, but the bustle and movement of the West is directed to definite purposes. Its energy is subject to no spasmodic impulses and no vague abstraction, but is all turned strictly to account. Much is being done, many things are being attended to. Every unit in the crowd almost has his own business in hand and is intent on it. Even pleasure-seekers go about their pleasure in this business-like way, and pay visits and dine and go to half a dozen balls a night with as methodical an energy as if they were interviewing clients or visiting patients.

This is all plain enough, but, of course, all this orderly and disciplined energy in outward behaviour is but the reflex of a corresponding quality in the Western mind. The movements of the European are decisive and orderly because he has a clear mental grasp of the things he means to do. In his mind he carries a plan of action, in obedience

to which he maps out his time, not for hours only, but for weeks and months in advance ; a plan of action duly and carefully thought out, and so not liable to capricious alteration. In the same way you will find that all his ideas and opinions relating to life are formed and definite, and that he has convictions on all the subjects of the day which he is very slow to change, because, like his plans, they are supported by reasons which seem to him good.

Here we have evidently at work, as the motive power of conduct, not the emotional but the intellectual faculty. We can easily, by the help of such a contrast, see that the whole life of the average European is formed, as it were, on an intellectual rather than on an emotional basis. Doubtless this is more the case with some nations than with others, but it is the case with all Western nations as contrasted with the East. All Western nations live more or less from the mind, and are perpetually busy with the plans of action laid down by the mind. Reason is the only guide the West acknowledges. We must "be reasonable," we must "listen to reason," we must "hear both sides," we must "get at the facts." The struggle to obtain a distinct intellectual conception of the conditions under which we live, and to modify and improve those conditions according to our own better ideas, is a passion with us. Any labourer or artisan will argue with his fellows by the hour on Tariff Reform or the Constitution of the House of Lords. Limited as his views may be, they are, in their nature, intellectual views. Vague as his grip of facts may be, it is, as far as it goes, an intellectual grip. Nay, is not all that the European means by the word liberty, so sacred a word in his eyes, the right to reason and to make what he conceives to be reason prevail? Liberty as we know it in the West does not flourish in the East. It involves arrangement and method and co-operation and argument and compromise, and these are processes of the intellect. It belongs to those steady walkers who carry plans in their heads.

This tough intellectual faculty, so visible in the very

make and shape of the Western man, in the steady eye and square jaw, the robust frame and firm step, which seem but the outward expression of a similar toughness of the mind, and which are the physical essentials for carrying into effect the decisions of the mind—this faculty, I think, is that which the West possesses and which the dreamy-eyed, supple-limbed East lacks. The East has its seers and prophets. The West has its politicians and men of science. The East feels. The West thinks. This is the human difference. And then what about that other difference which so much strikes our Eastern traveller? What have we in the West to set against the vivid, prevalent, rich colour that gleams and glows through Eastern life?

We have *form*. Form is to Western life what colour is to Eastern. It is the expression which Western life is constantly and involuntarily seeking. We have but to glance along the streets of any of our towns to see how natural and inevitable this mode of expression in the West is. The quality of Western architecture is unmistakable. I do not pretend that it is always, or even that it is often, beautiful, but it persistently retains the attributes which mark a constructive race. There is nothing slovenly or vague about it. The facades rise exactly perpendicular, each stone is shaped and fitted with mathematical precision, every moulding and lintel and pediment and pilaster is cut and adjusted with stern accuracy. Modern architecture is in many ways unsatisfactory, and to many people it is disappointing to contemplate the monotonous repetitions of Rome's dull and pompous ostentation, which, under professional auspices, are made to fulfil the functions of vital architecture. Nevertheless the incongruity of these buildings, when they come to be finished, will not be the most remarkable thing about them. The most remarkable thing about them will be the extraordinary conscientiousness and accuracy of their construction. We have got so used to this conscientiousness that we think nothing of it, but it

is nevertheless the one really interesting feature about modern building. That people should take infinite care in fashioning things they love and understand is not strange; but that they should take infinite care in fashioning things they neither love nor understand is strange indeed. Yet so it is in repeated instances. Among the ugly buildings of London it is probable that the new War Office will secure in the judgment of history a high place. But let the reader the next time he passes it force his reluctant eyes to appreciate the rigid, perfect construction of every part and portion of it, and he will agree that there is something here more noteworthy even than ugliness. Not a throb of pleasure in the work itself, in the things taking shape under their hands, not a moment's pride in the thought that their fellow-citizens would look with delight at their achievement, helped on these workers. It was mere dull, stupid routine from beginning to end. And yet look at the awful precision of it all, at the stern sense of duty which reigns in every detail. Is it not evident that to these workmen the clear and exact definition of *form* is something sacred, so sacred that even when it is put to senseless uses, even when it is wholly cut off from the life of the present and made to convey only a few old classical allusions and ideas which nobody understands or cares for, they still instinctively treat form with all care and reverence? Though there may be nothing in mechanical accuracy to admire, though such scrupulousness on the surface when there is nothing within, no meaning or thought of any kind, even aggravates ugliness, yet one may admit that this kind of treatment shows where the instinctive respect both of the public and of the workman lies. Indeed it is the case that, so long as the Western artisan or craftsman retains any sense of right conduct whatever, it will be in his respect for form that it will show itself. In these days, when all the meaning it drew from life has gone out of architecture, excellence of workmanship tends to follow, and it needs no very vigilant eye to



distinguish in all constructive work the signs of carelessness and scamping. But yet though the wood may be green and the paint reduced to a "lick," though the windows may let the draught in and mud may be used for mortar, still even in the most shoddily constructed suburban flats and villas the articulation of form remains perfect. Every wall is smartly flush, every angle sharp and square to a hair's-breadth, every measurement accurate, every curve true. Form is the ultimate refuge of Western self-respect, and if ever the time should come when Western walls and arches begin to bulge and waver, we may then indeed expect the imminent collapse of the whole fabric of European progress and civilisation.

And yet all this accuracy of form, accepted by us as quite a matter of course, would certainly strike an observant Oriental with wonder and astonishment. The like of it he has never seen. It is a new experience, containing dim suggestions of a strength of character and purpose with which he is totally unfamiliar. The rich and vivid colour of an Oriental bazaar is not more absent from our sombre streets than the iron clearness of Western architecture is absent from the tottering, fantastic edifices, pierced with distorted arches and propped by wooden beams, which nod to each other across the tortuous alleys of an Oriental city.

Architecture is the greatest of the works of man; but down to the least this difference holds. The contrast between East and West in architecture is the contrast between it in furniture-making, or jewelry, or the laying out of flower gardens, or the making and finishing of every kind of object or utensil for ornament or use. Every one who has lived in the East knows the impossibility of getting the simplest bit of work done with accuracy and simplicity. He will remember the carpenters and masons with their childish scolding ways, holding their tools as if they were afraid of them and fingering their materials with the tips of their fingers, so different from the easy grasp of the English artisan on



saw or chisel ; indeed, the mere way an English mason turns a brick ere he strikes it with the trowel-edge has a mastery in it which no Oriental mason ever attained to. The restless, nervous, slender hands of the East are all for intricacy and ingenuity. They will scratch trays and pots all over with elaborate patterns and designs, but to carve anything with sureness of outline and simplicity of shape is beyond them.

It is now many years ago since I was struck by and attempted to describe the profound similarity which exists between Arab life and history and Arab towns and bazaars. It was with Algiers that I was more particularly dealing, and, as I said, to visit the town and pass into its crumbling mass of masonry was to pass into the intricacies of Arab life. The winding, tortuous alleys, zigzagging in all directions, with holes drilled along their bases, out of which protrude piles of merchandise, richly coloured, making blots of purple and crimson in the shadowed way ; the irregular cliff of battered walls latticed with faded shutters, which seem to totter and lean towards each other for support ; the ghost-like robed figures which noiselessly and mysteriously appear, or vanish into their burrows—all left upon the imagination of a Western observer a strange impression of creatures not governed by any motives of action known to him, not governed by any definite intellectual conception of life, but governed rather by whim and caprice and fleeting emotional impulses. I had, I said, the same feeling when I stood or wandered in that picturesque labyrinth as when I turned the pages of an Arab history. " There are the same striking individual figures and incidents, the same brilliant glimpses and vivid little scenes, and behind and around all there is the same inextricable confusion, the same lack of all coherence and definite plan. The details of Arab history, however full of romantic and exciting adventures, are to the Western mind inevitably tedious. Of what causes are these events the effects ? Of what effects are they the causes ? are

questions which repeatedly recur while you study the thrilling but inconsequent narrative. One receives an impression as of the wrong side of a tapestry. The brilliant colours are there in every stitch, but they are woven into no intelligible design.”<sup>1</sup>

These are thoughts that come naturally to a traveller. The impression he receives of the West is a rational and intellectual impression, and, looking on art as an utterance of life, he will expect to find that the Western rationalism, with its clear-cut ideas and plans, should utter itself most spontaneously in the arts of form. On the other hand, the impression he receives of the East is a sensuous or emotional impression, such as may indeed find artistic expression in richness and intensity of colour, but which neither finds nor seeks expression in the arts of form or in articulate design.

Life is the secret of all. It is the fashion nowadays for critics to treat art as a subject distinct in itself and separable from the life which produced it. But art is not self-contained. It is a mode of self-expression not to be distinguished sharply from a thousand other modes of self-expression. Men reveal what they are in their gestures, their looks, and the tones of their voice. They reveal themselves also in their smallest actions, in the way they write their name, or shake hands, or take off their hat or put on their boots. And in the same way they reveal themselves in everything they make, of whatever kind, useful or ornamental, and especially do they reveal themselves in their works of art, which are the most apt conductors of human thoughts and emotions. A traveller's jottings are not therefore irrelevant to art. What he observes in Western cities and among Western crowds, the steady unhurried step, the self-controlled, almost emotionless manner, the purpose expressed in look and bearing, the disciplined, clear, scientific, well-organised system of life, so reasonable yet so cold—all these things are so much raw material which is bound to

<sup>1</sup> *In the Desert*, first chapter.

work up into an art of a similar and corresponding kind ; while, just as surely, the passion, the emotional force, the speculative bias, and the weak, indefinite impulses in the sphere of practical execution, which make up the play of forces in Oriental life, must issue in an art of the same negative and positive attributes.

## PART III

### CHAPTER XI

#### THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

The mediaeval period is the first epoch in our history in which the Christian point of view is formulated. Its chief characteristic consists in its equally vigorous interest in mundane and spiritual ideas. The guilds and the monasteries represent this dual development. The balance is not maintained. With the coming of the Renaissance spiritual ideas are dropped in favour of intellectual.

WE have dealt with Eastern and Western thought, and with their effects upon art. Eastern thought, we said, was spiritual and mystical in character; Western thought was rational and intellectual. The most striking feature of the history of man during the pre-Christian era is the distinct line of cleavage between the two. The opposition between them during that era is absolute. Whoever compares the spirit and temper of Indian and classic literature, or art, or politics, or philosophy, will instantly be aware of this opposition. It embraces all life. The East seems to be reserved and set apart for exclusive cultivation of the emotional faculty; the West seems to be reserved and set apart for the exclusive cultivation of the intellectual faculty.

But then we found, too, that, heralding the end of the classic epoch, the ancient exclusiveness of the classic intellectualism began to be disturbed by signs of a coming invasion. Following the physical intercourse and colonial penetration of East by West, Eastern ideas filtered Westward and largely transformed the character of Western

thought. The cities of Eastern Europe, which exchanged Eastern and Western commerce, also exchanged Eastern and Western ideas. "All over Asia Minor Hellenism had to mingle with Asiatic elements, losing in the contact all its fine austerity and sweet reasonableness."<sup>1</sup> Every one of these cities was trying its hand at the task to which the Greek intelligence had given itself up—the task of formulating a philosophy of Eastern ideas.

It was at this moment, when the fusion between spirit and intellect seemed complete, that a religious drama was enacted, which, in its own main facts, or dogmas as they came to be, answered to the needs of both the spiritual and intellectual faculties, and by so doing secured, so long as it could maintain its own dominance over life, the continuous and simultaneous development and cultivation of these hitherto separated sides of human nature.

Henceforth we have to deal with a life and an art which are conditioned by the dualism which Christianity involves. Christianity, the joining of East and West, undertakes the difficult task of reconciling these opposites; and it is with the recognition of this fact in our minds that we should approach the study of mediaeval life and art. Our reasons for choosing this epoch are of course obvious. The mediaeval moment has been the only moment in Christian Europe when life has been sufficiently sure of its own meaning to express itself in a coherent and original style of art. The earlier centuries, down to the mediaeval age, are encumbered with the idea of the great Empire that had passed away; they are centuries that are perpetually looking back over their shoulders at the departing shadow of Rome. This retro-

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Stobart, *The Glory that was Greece*, p. 251. Mr. Stobart is quite aware of the connection between these political events and the history of art. "Even the sculpture with which the wealthy Attalids adorned their great altar of Zeus at Pergamum, though Greek in plot and execution, is of almost Asiatic luxuriance and voluptuous beauty. Passion and effort replace calm and dignity, even as they do in the new Asiatic schools of oratory. Alexander's violent battering at the gates which separate East from West had produced a strange hybrid in many of the cities of Eastern Greece."



spective tendency shows itself equally in life and art, in attempts to revive the Imperial system of government and in attempts to maintain the basis of Romanesque architecture. Later centuries, on the other hand, are too evidently and too deeply infected with the imitative bias and profound insincerity of the Renaissance to be able to speak for the life of their age as a whole. Their attitude towards art is vitiated by the conception they have formed of it as a fruit of culture rather than a fruit of life.

To the mediaeval age, therefore, we turn. We find in that age a new order of society laid down in accordance with the genius of the new races. The Germanic Empires on the Roman model no longer stand the chief representatives of law and order. There has sprung to life a new kind of social organism in the North. A new national bond has been forged. The young races of Europe advance with their own conception of what is to constitute nationhood. The principle of liberty, and the purpose and resolve to establish this principle as the basis of a practical system of government, are to be the maxims of the new progressive states. Free communes and free boroughs, charters and privileges and the rights of the common people are the watchwords of the new citizenship. A society, rude it may be, but robust, fresh formed and evidently instinct with vitality, dates from the mediaeval epoch. This is Europe's voice, the voice of the Europe that we know, by contrast with the voice of the old Roman Europe that has now definitely passed. And, identifying the moment, there occurs one of those unmistakable creative epochs in art, a movement so coherent in character and so vigorous in articulation that all who but glance at it must be aware that a new interpretation of life, a new conception of life's value and meaning, is at the back of it.

Let us then, in regard to this age, follow our usual course. Let us, before we turn to the art which it produced, turn to the life out of which that art grew. It was not difficult to seize the ruling principle of Eastern

life, nor was it difficult to seize the ruling principle of classic life, for each of these adhered closely to a single idea. The mediaeval epoch does not adhere to a single idea, and therefore loses something perhaps in immediate intelligibility, yet the character of its thought is not really obscure.

For whoever looks at that age frankly and freely will easily distinguish the two main motives by which it is inspired. He will, to begin with, at once realise that the age is one of immense practical energy. The burghers and citizens who, for the better defiance of feudalism, banded themselves together in the earliest English towns, were undoubtedly as shrewd and hard-headed a generation as it would be easy to find. Their purposes and intentions were of an immediately practical kind. Their aim was the very intelligible one of securing their own independence and right to manage their own affairs, and the means they adopted went straight to the point. The lack of personal authority and a personal following was supplied by the excellence of their organisation. To the solitary tyranny of the nobles they opposed the collective unanimity of the commons. But that bond to be effective had to be individually felt and acknowledged. What made the citizens of an English town of the Middle Ages so difficult a force to subdue was the unflinching clearness with which each man envisaged the end in view and the stubbornness of character which each brought to its realisation.

If we look at mediaevalism from this standpoint we can do no other than admit its materialistic efficiency. Its purposes are usually of that description. The determination of the shop-keeper and craftsman to direct the affairs of their own borough, and to supervise with jealous vigilance the least concerns of their own handicrafts, seem to denote a people whose ideals lack nothing in mundane tangibility. If ever there were a race of doers, rather than dreamers, one would have thought that the weavers, and armourers, and dyers, and bakers,

and masons of a mediæval town, knit together in their gilds for the maintenance of their own rights, were such a race.

Yet this would have been but half the truth. The curious and so far unique character of the age consists in the intermingling, with the mundane temper which so conspicuously belongs to it, of an equally clearly marked spirit of devout contemplation and emotional ecstasy. The age is not only that in which material aims are pursued with the greatest vigour and the keenest realisation of their practical value ; it is also that in which spiritual aims are pursued with an equally intense concentration. If mediæval society derived a quite unusual satisfaction from the prosecution of all kinds of human endeavour, so did it also derive more felicity than ever before or since from the inward contemplation of the truths revealed by spiritual consciousness. Mediæval society appears like a cord composed of two strands, one white the other red, twisted together, yet still distinguishable the one from the other. Thinkers at all times have told us that the things of the world and the things of the spirit are separate and can only be pursued separately ; yet at this moment they are being pursued simultaneously and that not with less but with more than usual ardour and success in both quests.

So opposed in their natures do these qualities appear that, when we turn back into history and fix our attention on the scenes and occasions which display their rival action, we seem to be dealing with the past of different races and ages. The occasions which display the influence of the virile energy of that age testify to a temperament, a racial character, a point of view apparently inconsistent with the ideals and aspirations of the contemplative faculty. What are the motives which underlie the mediæval strenuousness ? The chief, you would say, was an extraordinarily vivid consciousness of the significance of man's mortal existence. In this the Aryan race, even in its youthful, primitive days, differs from other races.

What lends animation and interest to Aryan barbarism is the vigorous grasp it has of the concrete—a grasp which seems at once to express the race's recognition of the opportunities latent in the material universe, together with its own determination to make the most of them. The young of this vigorous breed set to work upon their surroundings like men who perceive in those surroundings the plastic material in which all their own purposes and thoughts are to receive expression. It would almost seem as if, from the very first, there had existed, among the wandering tribes destined to national advancement, an instinctive consciousness of what was in store for them. The struggles they waged, whether against the declining Empire they invaded or amongst each other, were never merely destructive. They were struggles for opportunities, for the right to build cities, and own land, and increase, and expand, and develop. These barbarians, however rude, are aware already of what the future holds for them.

The contrast I have in view between the active and contemplative principles which so strangely constitute mediaeval life is very well exemplified in the two leading institutions of that period. The English guilds are often thought of as corporate trading bodies, as associations founded for the purpose of protecting their trade rights and maintaining among their members a certain standard of craftsmanship. These, however, were not the original motives of their creation. The original motive had its roots in the social circumstances of Europe during the Dark Ages and its purpose was the assertion and maintenance of popular liberty. The guilds are the answer to the self-assertion of individual tyranny, and it is in them that we first catch sight, in its visible effects, of that love of freedom which was to form the basis of European civilisation.

Naturally the idea of association is as old as human history, and many theories have been proposed (by Harting, Wilder, and others), in which the guild system



is derived from Greek, Roman, and other sources. What we are here concerned with is the growth of the movement among Northern races, and the point to be borne in mind is that the gilds arose, not in the first place out of any consideration of craftsmanship, but as a vehicle or instrument through which the people could assert their claims to liberty and their right to handle and manage their own affairs. The collective principle they inculcated acted immediately on town development. Green emphasises, what is so evident a trait in mediaeval history, the fact that "the rights of self-government, of free speech in free meeting, of equal justice by one's equal, were brought safely across the age of Norman tyranny by the traders and shopkeepers of the towns." He adds that "in the quiet, quaintly-named street, in town-mead and market-place . . . in the bell that swung out its summons to the crowded thoroughfare, in the jealousies of craftsmen and guilds, lay the real life of Englishmen, the life of their home and trade, their ceaseless, sober struggle with oppression, their steady, unwearied battle for self-government." Such was the part played by the towns; but the germs of the towns were the gilds. As early as the ninth and tenth centuries the gild organisations were already translating themselves into town institutions. An association or collection of people is already a town in all but houses, the growth of the town being but the completion of the popular instinct for combination. Where but two or three were gathered together there existed already a consciousness of strength and security which in its turn tended to attract the unattached and unprotected. The instinct towards association, formulated as a precept, or ideal, by the gilds, was in outward visible fact, embodied in the towns. The town, in short, was as much the refuge and fortress of the communal or gild system as the castle was the fortress of the individual or feudal system.

A further indication of the character of the early gilds is to be found in the attitude of feudalism towards them.



At the time when the English gilds were successfully asserting their right to recognition, those on the Continent were everywhere forbidden and persecuted by the authorities. "A series of Capitularies of the Emperor Charlemagne and his successors interfered with all kinds of combinations and unions. . . . Not only those which proposed directly unlawful objects were threatened with scourging, nose-slitting, banishment, and such-like punishments of their members, but even those whose object was protection against robbery and other kinds of violence."<sup>1</sup> Instances occur of stringent measures of repression taken against the gilds, from which it is evident that every tyrannic influence regarded them with an instinctive and bitter hostility. "The crime of the serfs in their unions," observes Brentano, "consisted in their endeavouring to provide redress for their grievances without making use of the intervention of their masters, whose powers over them such intervention always increased. Even when the poor people, who were without protection against the inroads of the Normans, leagued themselves into several brotherhoods, and in this manner offered firm resistance to the robbers, they were cut down by the Frankish nobles as a reward for their bravery."

I have drawn the reader's attention to the gilds because, of all the influences active throughout the mediaeval age, it would seem that these are the most fundamentally characteristic of Western thought and the Western point of view. On the one hand they are the institutions which are most powerful and which most obviously determine the national development; on the other they are in their intention typical of the ruling motives of the commons. What we think of as the business instinct of the British people, their level-headedness and independence of character, their aptitude for achieving practical ends by practical means, is perfectly illustrated in the formation and discipline of the gilds. The influence of the gilds measures the strength of the hold which

<sup>1</sup> L. Brentano's *History of the Gilds*.

mediaeval society maintained on the material interests of life.

But there is another aspect of mediaeval life almost as conspicuous, and this too has its associations and leagued brotherhoods. Scarcely less universal and less flourishing, and scarcely after their manner less influential, the monasteries play almost as important a part in mediaeval life as the gilds. Monasticism, it is important to notice, was a spontaneous growth which sprang up everywhere, in every nation, not by any act of authority on the part of the church, but out of a widespread popular sentiment which everywhere nourished and sustained it. It is necessary, if we would do it justice, to consider the movement in its vigour and its prime, and to resist the temptation to examine its decline and estimate its character by the traits it then exhibited. Those defects are such as appear natural and comprehensible to our own critical faculty, for the fervour of monasticism died away into the intellectualism of the Renaissance, and as it weakened it was preyed upon by the very maladies which intellect is so apt to detect in its explanations of spiritual phenomena. Self-indulgence and sensuality, hypocrisy and make-belief, worldly greed and luxury, the natural ills which intellect attributes to devotional establishments, came to be, as the age passed from the spiritual to the intellectual standpoint, the very ills by which they were assailed. We, being naturally intellectualists, easily adopt this line of criticism, and with perfect complacency persuade ourselves that we have dealt with the essential qualities of the monastic movement when we have signalled certain symptoms of disease which attended its decline.

We shall not make much progress in that way. A movement like monasticism, so obviously indigenous to the soil which produced it, so recognised and important an ingredient in national history, so woven into the life of the people, and even adopted, as we may say, by the very scenery with which its buildings were

associated—such a movement is not to be estimated by what is negative and defective in it, but by what is positive and effective. Causes profound and vital in the life of that age could alone have produced effects of such consequence. What drew these men forward along the path they trod? What was the felicity they promised themselves? It was no more than every ascetic, in every age and clime where asceticism has been practised, has laboured to attain. Whenever and wherever seclusion and asceticism have become rules of life, the same motive is at work. Monastic history, the letters of monks, even the relics which survive of their gardens and cloisters, repeat an admonition which has never varied since the world began. Not by reasoning and thinking, so all mystics say, can man attain to the bliss of spiritual insight. Reason dwells on earth, and its business is with the things of earth. It can never yield us more than that dim and faint testimony to the spiritual order which materialism itself contains. Like comprehends like. For the comprehension of the spiritual order man needs a spiritual faculty; and such a one he possesses. The soul is to man his spiritual eye by which he is instructed and enlightened; only to use it to this end it is necessary that the attention and the will be concentrated on the act of spiritual attention, and that the whole order of the temporal and the finite, which is reason's subject-matter, should be silenced and shut out. Hence the purpose of asceticism. Whenever soul rather than intellect is accepted for guide, the inclination towards asceticism and seclusion is invariable. Let the universe and all objects be as though they were not; let the breath be stilled, the very heart-beats suspended, the consciousness of physical existence annihilated, and by degrees spiritual consciousness will take the place of physical, and, passively surrendering his whole being to contemplation, the visionary will be drawn into a complete participation in spiritual existence.

From whence was this spirit of mysticism derived

which so strangely illumines mediaeval life? It was not indigenous to the West. It was drawn from the East. We have already seen how, before and during the classic age, while all the West that counts was being saturated with pure intellectualism, the East was already brooding over its one and only thought of spiritual vision; and how the Greeks themselves, when they had run their own solution to a standstill, came in contact with that thought and fell in love with it, and, under manifold philosophic disguises, introduced it into the West. With it came its inevitable attendant, the ascetic life, and together the two—the idea of an inward spiritual vision and of a monastic discipline for its cultivation—working constantly from East to West—slowly invaded Europe. Yet there remains always, even after the idea of a disciplinary system had been fully accepted by the West, a difference between Western and Eastern discipline which is significant. The rigour of monasticism is always in proportion to the intensity of the mysticism it is directed to promote. In the East, where mysticism is undiluted, asceticism has been carried to its most terrible extremes. In that nearer East, the meeting-ground of East and West which has been most largely influenced by Hellenic ideas, the ascetic system was shorn of some of its terrors and in part adapted to human limitations. In the more essentially rational West, where mysticism is after all but a guest, the monastic ideal has ever been comparatively mundane as well as turned to more practical uses. The rule of St. Benedict, which is the rule of Western monasticism, is adapted from the Eastern rule, or rule of St. Basil, yet contrives not only to mitigate the austerities prescribed by the East, but also to adapt its abstract and transcendental philosophy to the purposes of a rational existence. It made allowance for the weaknesses of flesh and blood. More than that, it so far recognised the world that it provided for the exercise of other faculties than itself, a concession quite outside the ken of Oriental asceticism, and even encouraged



literature and art, the recognition of the claims of knowledge, and such intellectual activity as the age permitted.

These modifications are perfectly typical of the Western point of view, which has always declined to surrender itself to a purely abstract thought, and always insisted on recognising the claims of the material universe. Still the point to be borne in mind is, that the inclination towards seclusion and asceticism, always apparent in the East in conjunction with a certain mode of apprehension, when that mode of apprehension was imported into the West, travelled westward also in the wake of it. It grew up first in the Eastern confines of Christendom, in Egypt and Palestine and Syria, and was thence transplanted into the Western parts of Europe. It flourished and spread, bearing witness in its growth to the depth of the impulse it arose from, yet wearing, to some extent, an alien aspect, an aspect not perfectly congenial to Western life. The strain of deep emotional feeling, passive and still in its nature, and indeed dependent on clearness and calmness of soul for its very power to be and act—this spiritual strain which penetrates mediaeval life, while penetrating seems scarcely to belong to it. It is often difficult to reconcile the ideal of contemplation with the strenuous habits which prevail in the society of the period. No doubt every institution, or profession, must draw the ideas it subsists on out of contemporary life ; yet who would have guessed that the eager, energetic temper which seems to animate most of the aspects of mediaevalism would have yielded adequate sustenance to such an ideal as the monastic ? Who, studying the social, political, and communal activities of the time, would have looked to find, growing freely out of their rough turbulence, and mysteriously feeding upon it, haunts of dreamy contemplation and meditative repose ? Not less seems the contrast the writer remembers between the shaggy trunks and branches of Eastern jungles and the clusters of waxen orchids which, high



up among the shadows, broke from the rude bark in which they had so unexpectedly taken root.

Of the two motives we have just glanced at, which together ruled mediaeval life, it was not the mystical impulse which, in the following centuries, was to expand and develop, but rather the practical and realistic impulse of which the communes were the centre. Realism, not spiritualism, was, in the immediate future, to dominate Western culture. There has never been a radical change in the Western standpoint. A citizen of the thirteenth century, awakening in present times, would find little in modern progress, with its discoveries and inventions, and applications of science to life, which he would not readily accept. The essentially rational bias of his mind would adapt it to receive all that the Renaissance had to offer. At the same time, accepting modern life, he would look round for something that had dropped out of it. What, among all this reasoning and analysing and investigating, had become of the old thought of spiritual vision? What indeed! It would seem to have evaporated. It would seem that, as in Eastern life the cultivation of the mystical faculty has led to intellectual atrophy and to the soaking of Oriental life in the spirit of dreamy acquiescence which mysticism engenders, so, in Western life, the tendency to an exclusively intellectual culture has been to atrophy the mystical faculty and drench life in the material estimates which intellect can best handle. The growth, in short, of intellect in the West is registered not more in its own progress than in its rival's decline. As the time drew on for the birth of the age of reason, men's thoughts assumed a more definitely mundane cast. There are critics who affirm that the decay of monasticism was due to laxity within the religious orders. No, the decay of monasticism was due to the waning of the contemplative instinct throughout the West. While that instinct lasted and maintained itself in Western life monasticism kept its health, for it had that in life which it could

feed on. It was not until the instinct was vitiated by the trend of the Western mind towards rationalism that those who had hitherto looked to a spiritual source for their felicity began to seek it in more mundane recreations.

One word I would add. It is not enough that we should be able to discern in mediaeval life certain traces of practical and material energy, or certain vestiges of spiritual contemplation. We might discover such in almost any age, and among almost any people, for there are no attributes possible to humanity of which, if we looked close enough, we should not at any time detect the rudiments or the relics. What we want is something very different. Motives dominate art in proportion as they have first dominated life. What we call style in art is the assertion, over the whole area of art, of the influence of certain motives which already have achieved a like control over the life of the age. It is the leading and governing life-motives which we are after. Have we correctly hit upon them? Does the reader, when he conjures up in his imagination the age of the craftsman and the monk, see it under the double aspect and dominated by the two families of ideas which we have spoken of? If so, then we shall find that on the art also of their epoch the influence of these motives is no less clearly imprinted.

Mediaeval life and art, then, are typical of what we have called the Christian point of view, in that they attempt a reconciliation of matter and spirit.

As regards the following period, the period known as the Renaissance, which has lasted to our own day, its general tendency and direction are evident. Mediaevalism, uniting mundane and spiritual interests in a high degree of vigour, utters itself, in art, in terms both of form and colour. The Renaissance, remarkable above all for the strongly and specifically intellectual bias which it lent to the human mind, concentrates its attention more and more on the quality of form. The period of the "awakening of the intellect," hailed as the fount

and origin of that strong desire to know, in the concrete intellectual sense, which is the basis of modern science, and indeed of modern civilisation, is remarkable for a very distinct turning away of human interest from spiritual and emotional affairs, and an equally pronounced concentration of human interest on the material and mundane aspects of the universe. This strong, overmastering intellectual stimulus of course had the effect of vitalising and developing all those means of expression which properly belong to intellect, at the same time that the impoverishing of the spiritual faculty had the effect of starving to death the means of expression which belong to spiritual consciousness. These phenomena are familiar to all who are interested in such subjects. It is patent not only that the mind of the Renaissance epoch is concentrated on problems of form to the practical exclusion of problems of colour, but also it is clear that this movement in favour of form was inaugurated in the very spot where the intellectual impulse arose, and that the two, the craving after the intellectual order of ideas and the craving after the mastery of form-expression in which those ideas best utter themselves, grew up as it were hand in hand, the intellectual impulse in life constantly acting upon and nourishing the development of form in art.

Florence was that city "crowded with culture" in which the Renaissance as an intellectual movement originated. Nowhere else in Christianised Europe down to the present day has intellectualism seemed so beautiful, so dignified, so joyous, so altogether satisfying and sufficient a motive in life, as in the Florence of the Renaissance. To her our thoughts still turn. Modern thought, modern criticism, modern science go back to Florence. In the southern half of Italy the Renaissance meant a revival of the pagan joy in life without the revival of pagan culture and thought. In the north it was the other way about, and the scholasticism and dry learning of Padua and Bologna missed the warm, living,

human side of paganism. Florence alone captured both, and included in her culture the old studiousness while infusing into it the old glow. Hence her perpetual inspiration. We have pressed research far in many directions since Pico della Mirandola, like a more romantic Bacon, set out to conquer all knowledge, but we have not left, and never shall leave, Florence behind. For the sake of the fervour with which she testifies, not to specific results, but to the happiness which springs from thinking, we shall turn back to her again and again. We shall ask her to brace our minds, to strengthen and animate us with her own joyful confidence. Penned in and circumscribed by barriers of our own erection, and specialising in narrow plots of learning and research, we may yet once more achieve, as we immerse ourselves in Florentine life, the vision we are so apt to lose sight of, of the beauty and freedom and freshness of intellectual adventure.

All this is the spirit of Athens over again, and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the art of Florence should, in its main intention and direction, take after the art of Athens. Like Athenian art, Florentine art is essentially an art of form. The fact that it uses colour with such a finely descriptive purpose, and the further fact that we ourselves for the most part understand and recognise only that use of it, may dispose us to somewhat over-estimate the attainments of Florentine colour. The truth, however, is that, if we place ourselves in the position of any Florentine painter or sculptor of this period, we shall instantly perceive that our whole attitude towards our subject is governed by intellectual considerations, and that we are conceiving the situation, personality, or scene to be depicted entirely as a study and dramatic arrangement of forms. This it is which lends to Renaissance art its air of scientific development. Florentine art is constantly preoccupied with scientific accuracy of representation. Modern art criticism has very rightly specified this tendency. A short time ago our art critics were all expatiating on it

and were all telling us what a great pity it was that a movement, which at one time promised so well, should have been turned into a mere matter of technical knowledge, chiefly devoting its attention to such bleak and cold-blooded considerations as the laws of perspective, foreshortening, and anatomy, and other details of the science of correct delineation.

And not only did Florentine art catch its scientific spirit from the essentially scientific disposition of the Florentine mind; Florentine intellectualism went over Europe, and with it went also the Florentine scientific estimate of art. All over Europe, in consequence of the avidity with which this estimate was adopted, it came to be believed that the chief end of art was accurate representation.

What Florence did in short was to intellectualise art, or in other words to make it the instrument of expression of an intellectualised order of ideas. First she intellectualised our ideas and then she intellectualised our way of expressing our ideas. To any one who follows Renaissance thought and art, this must, I think, be evident. The danger is lest it should be too evident. The danger is lest we set down the Renaissance for an intellectual movement pure and simple, of a simplicity and sincerity equal to the pagan. There are obvious temptations on that side, yet to yield to them would be fatally to misunderstand the whole era.

St. Francis may be taken as the living prototype of that urgent and insistent protest against the mundane inclination of the Renaissance which is to be traced all through the movement, side-tracking, as it were, its keen intellectualism and investing all its attempts to live the pagan life over again with that air of feverish makebelieve which never fails to attend them. It is quite obvious, to us who can compare the paganism of the Renaissance with the paganism of Athens and Rome, to us who can appreciate the difference between the over-anxious, over-eager imitation and the calm and self-sufficient reality—



it is so obvious that the Florentine experiments in this direction were really much more an attempt to live up to an ideal which had captured the intellectual taste of the day than an unconscious and spontaneous expression of the national life. The forced note is always audible. Loudly vocal though it was, the Renaissance was too purely a matter of reasoning and thinking to touch very deeply the lives of the people. Underneath it the spiritual life went on.

How ineradicable that life was the enthusiasms of the people show. St. Francis died in 1226, thirty-nine years before the birth of Dante, and seventy-eight before that of Petrarch. Throughout the century which followed his death the elements which were to determine the character of the Renaissance were rapidly taking shape. It is with Petrarch that we reach the definite point of view of Renaissance culture, but in all movements of this kind—movements of the mind—it is a question not only of the new philosophy, but of the temperament and mental bias of the period. It will not do to stop at the fact that the ideas coming into vogue were in a preponderating degree humanist and mundane; it has to be considered on what kind of clay they were acting. This is why it is so essential, in estimating the character and studying the development of the Renaissance, to bear in mind the dimensions and influence of Petrarch's two great predecessors, Dante and St. Francis. For the emotions and impulses which these gave expression to were ingredients in the Italy which the humanists set about paganising. The reader cannot but have noticed how usual it is for a genuinely creative epoch to be preceded by a period of uncertainty and stagnation. The ideals that were vital hitherto seem in such crises to lose their relation to life, and it is on a society which appears to have exhausted its former beliefs that the dawn of the new era breaks. But the beginnings of the Renaissance were **not** of this character at all. There was nothing effete or worn-out in existing conditions. Petrarch and

Dante were more or less contemporaries ; that is to say, Petrarch was a youth of seventeen when Dante, at the age of fifty-six, died. Certainly no one will pretend that of these two poets, the one standing for the culture of the Renaissance and the other for the depth and earnestness of the Middle Ages, it was the Renaissance poet who represented the chief elements of strength and vitality. On the contrary it was obviously the elder poet who possessed most of these qualities and possessed them in virtue of the fact that he had inherited the mediaeval tradition. Dante's mediaevalism constituted his vitality, just as the Renaissance element in Petrarch constituted his artificiality. There could not be a better illustration of the relative depth of the instincts to which the two ages appealed, nor any better example of the comparatively superficial penetration of the new teaching.

The truth is the Renaissance cut a figure somewhat out of proportion to its real significance, because being essentially intellectual, and therefore intensely conscious of itself and its purposes, it was able to express itself in literature and art with a captivating logic and fluency. To gauge its limitations it is necessary to bear in mind two orders of events : first, the signs of artificiality and affectation in itself, in its art and manners, its worship of the antique and aping of the cult of paganism—characteristics which invest it, in spite of its splendour, with a quite unmistakable aroma of orange-peel and sawdust ; and secondly, the numerous signs, which are forthcoming if one looks for them, of the existence of another, contrary, more profound spirit, lurking like a shadow and dimly to be discerned behind the mask of intellectualism of the age. The rise of the influence of Savonarola, the convulsions of spiritual excitement and terror into which he could fling the capital of humanism, the wistful and visionary mood which so strangely and persistently blends with the art of the age, from time to time the appearance of directly spiritual personalities, such as we have learned to distinguish as mystics—these are among the evidences

forthcoming of the survival of certain instincts, deep sunk in the character and temperament of a race, which, though they might be overlaid and hidden by more articulate qualities for a while, yet remained in existence biding their time.

Let us cite as an example of these testimonies to the presence of a kind of inward leaven working amid hostile surroundings the career of that devout Franciscan, St. Bernardino, born in the city of Siena, a city which more than any in Italy has identified itself with the spiritual idea, in the year 1380. Sixty-four years later he lay dying at Aquila, in the Abruzzi, after a life of preaching and exhortation, carried out under circumstances and with results which mark him as among the most potent spiritual influences of the age. The crowds that thronged around his dead body as it lay in state, and all the passionate signs of the veneration and grief of a whole populace which the event called forth, enable us to estimate to some extent the depth and reality of the instincts to which the saint appealed among the rank and file of the people.

Over in Florence the Renaissance is in full swing. It wants but five years to the birth of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Donatello is at the summit of his fame. The great age is about to dawn. To all who would penetrate beneath outward appearances and divine the nature of the deeper forces in operation I would commend a moment's careful scrutiny of the events that were happening at Aquila and Florence at this particular moment. The difference between the two is the difference between an experiment in culture carried out by clever people of wealth and importance and an inarticulate conviction which lay hid in the heart of a people. It serves to remind us that though the Renaissance may outwardly appear purely intellectual yet it is not so inwardly. Indeed, the insincerity of Renaissance art is due to this, that it thinks, or pretends, that the life it is expressing is much more purely intellectual than it really is.

I have not dealt with the artistic representation of this conflict of ideas during the Renaissance in the following pages ; I have not done so partly because it is impossible to deal separately with every interesting crisis in the history of art, and partly because I have already treated this side of the subject pretty fully in the book I have referred to, *The Works of Man*. The chapter entitled " The Gothic Contribution " in that book gives an account of the constructive energy of Gothic architecture, while under the heading " The Rise of the Renaissance " I have attempted to describe what is best in the intellectual movement. The two chapters bearing most immediately on the issue, however, are those which describe the technical development of Renaissance painting and the difference in spirit between modern and ancient sculpture. In the present volume I have been content to deal with the emotional side of the subject, emphasising especially the significance of the rich colour-schemes attained by Gothic stained glass and the similar deep and glowing tints which Venice derived from Eastern sources.

At the same time I would end by pointing out as clearly as possible the conjunction at which we are now arrived. I have called the three parts of this book " The Eastern Point of View," " The Western Point of View," and " The Christian Point of View." The last, as I understand it, attempts a reconciliation or fusion of the first two. In this lies its claim to originality, or claim to constitute the inspiration of a creative art. The purely spiritual and the purely intellectual ideas had each been separately and assiduously developed. Each of these chief means or vehicles of human enlightenment had been the subject of an exclusive culture by East and West. But hitherto the opposition which seemingly divides spiritual from material things had kept the two apart. It was by its denial of this opposition, by its announcement that spirit could enter into matter, and belong to and form part of matter, that Christianity promulgated

a new basis of thought and of art, the full significance of which has scarcely yet dawned upon the world. Thence arose a conception of the universe, of Nature, and of man wholly different from any which had been formed before, a conception which made it its object to combine the human and material value of pagan thought with the spirituality of Eastern thought. The new conception rested not on arguments, but on facts. In the fact that the Deity had entered the human state, had adopted materialism, had assumed and practised the responsibilities and duties of a human being, had preached and sanctioned the ordinary virtues of kindness and neighbourly charity, had loved others and won the love of others, nay, had even loved the birds that flew from tree to tree and the flowers that grew wild in the fields, was contained as full and explicit a recognition of the earthly state as any pagan could desire. But it was a recognition not confined within pagan limitations. Having thus seized upon all that was significant in the pagan outlook Christianity proceeded to annex also what was valuable in Eastern thought; it proceeded to demonstrate that the human state, though significant, though real, is not final, but debouches into, and fulfils itself in, a spiritual state. Whoever cares to pause and dwell on the facts, whether alleged or actual, of Christianity must in fact perceive that the Incarnation and the Ascension are indeed expressly designed to appeal both to Western and Eastern thought—in other words, to include those opposite faculties in man which deal with mundane and spiritual considerations.

I say that this is what constitutes the originality of Christianity. This is what gives it a position as commanding and entirely its own as that of either of the two great philosophies which had preceded it. This, too, is the secret of its instant and strong bearing upon art, for by this means does it draw what hitherto was abstract and inexpressible in spiritual thought within reach of the means of expression which art possesses.



The character of the thought always dictates the art. The reader will remember that, in dealing with Eastern thought, we were dealing with a thought of an entirely abstract kind, which refuses to recognise even the existence of Nature or of matter ; the consequence being that all that Nature and matter contribute to art,—reasonableness, the sense of form, the gift of articulation,—are absent from Eastern art. But this tendency to abstraction always produces the same effects, and we might equally have instanced the Jewish race with its rigidly supernatural outlook and curiously similar deficiency in art. The Jewish idea of Deity, almost as abstract as the Hindu philosophical idea, favoured the conception, a vitally racial one and always present to the imagination of the chosen people, of a Being which might speak to its elect by signs, or in thunder and through veiling clouds, but whose spiritual nature was too absolute ever to reveal itself in concrete form. The idea of an invisible, almighty Guardian, watching over the Jewish nation, directing its destinies and confounding its enemies, might inspire a lofty and solemn poetry, but could afford no opportunity for art. Consequently, to the Jews a poetry of this order, a poetry of more than Miltonic solemnity and grandeur, seems to have been as native as sculpture to the Greeks, while of the formative arts they were so essentially ignorant and careless that they were obliged to borrow from other races, or painfully to train for the occasion artists and architects for the erection of their own temples. Fiercely the Jews themselves insisted upon this limitation. Fiercely they struck at the latent desire to define and render intelligible the abstract thought : “Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image” ; an abstract God, “Him only shalt thou serve.” The command broke the back of art, for it bound the national conviction to an idea which art could not participate in expressing.

Through Jewish wanderings and Jewish history what is more pathetic than the sternly suppressed, but in-

stinctively renewed efforts of the people to humanise their austere abstract faith? What is this besetting tendency which possesses them to run after false gods and bow down to stocks and stones? It is the craving of human nature somehow to get the eternal within reach of its own faculties. Thou shalt not make images; thou shalt not define, or in any way reduce to the human standard and the proportions of finite thought that which is abstract and divine. The Âtman is silence; the Holy of Holies is empty. Between the human and the divine a bottomless gulf is fixed.

It was by the bridging of this gulf that the opportunity of the artistic faculty was restored to it. "The Word was made flesh" is just as much the foundation of Christian art as it is the foundation of Christian thought. It restored to art, what all art needs, a participation in the governing thought of the race. The reader cannot fail to have observed that throughout the whole course of Christian art the distinction between the Jewish and Christian elements, between that which is not expressible in art and that which is expressible, is preserved. The Almighty, the Jewish abstract element, forms no part of Christian art. It forms no part of any art. How can you represent as a person that which never had a person, as a shape that which never took shape? Numbers of artists have essayed the task and not one has succeeded.<sup>1</sup> That impossible figure, of which all the attributes are spiritual, has been introduced into no composition save to its detriment. Christian art is the art of Christ. Throughout its greatest periods the presence and person of Christ, and every action of His life from His birth to His death, have been the dominant inspiration. More than that, the aroma, as it were, the sentiment caught from His human character and teaching have pervaded and exalted, as motives in art, even those scenes and events in which He Himself does not appear.

To reflect upon this is to perceive that the explanation

<sup>1</sup> Blake is the sole exception.

that Jewish and Christian art differ only racially will not hold. The cause of the difference lies in the guiding thought. The thought that was artistically barren in Jewish hands remained barren in Christian hands. But to this was added another thought, a thought that was not purely spiritual and abstract, but human and concrete as well. This was the basis of Christian art. Christian art, as an art of definition and a mode of utterance, was made possible by the Incarnation.

In reviewing the whole of the history of that art this blending purpose of Christianity has to be borne in mind. Mediaeval life and art represent the best attempt so far made to realise this ideal. But the attempt is not a complete success. The flaw both in mediaeval life and art consists in the insufficient intellectual development of the period. Mediaeval life, we must always remember, precedes the Renaissance, precedes the intellectual awakening. It is not, therefore, and cannot be in the full sense, intellectual. Its reasoning tendency, its strong practical inclination, its obvious sympathy with mundane and material interests promise intellectual development in the near future. But that stage is not yet reached, and both mediaeval life and art suffer in consequence. Neither think half as deeply as they feel. The best in both springs from emotion.

Nevertheless the two elements are both represented. The strong and vigorous mundane instinct in life dictates an equally pronounced artistic energy, while the spiritual depth adds the note of richness and splendour which is so rare in the West. Most people for this reason regard the mediaeval epoch as the moment when we attained a certain completeness of life, albeit of a more or less rough and rude order.

Then follows the Renaissance, and there ensues immediately that lopsidedness of progress from which we still suffer. The intellectual idea was vigorously cultivated, the emotional dropped. The reason Renaissance culture affects only the surface of life is that, in

renouncing the spiritual element, it renounced the popular element, the element which forms the connecting link between art and the national life. It renounced this in order to promote the idea of art as a matter of culture and the perquisite of an exclusive and privileged minority. Henceforth the national life lost the pleasure which it can derive from art, while art lost the robustness and sincerity which it derives from life.

## CHAPTER XII

### STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS

The mystical or spiritual element which belongs to mediaeval life, and in the sphere of life expresses itself in monasticism, expresses itself in art in depth and richness of colour. While that spirit lives in life it lives in art; when it dies out of life and makes way for the reasoning Renaissance the deep colour ebbs out of art, making way for the exactitude of form.

WE dwelt in the last chapter on the dualism of mediaeval life—its vivid and virile energy on the one hand, which translated all ideas into terms of action, and on the other its inward spirit of mystical contemplation. There is little need to enlarge on the former motive, as it has been translated into terms of art, for every one who is in the least conversant with Gothic architecture and sculpture must be aware of just the same quality of virile energy in the art of the period which life itself contains. We have all followed with wonder the course of the problems in construction proposed and solved by mediaeval masons. We have all marvelled at the lofty vaults which do battle with each other with thrust and counter-thrust, at the rapidly ascending vaulting shafts which shoot upward to break and diverge into the ribs of the vaults, at the buttresses and flying buttresses which push against the giddy height of the choir. The whole structural scheme is none the less replete with energy that, owing to the equilibrium of the forces engaged, it is frozen into a precarious immobility. No less familiar to us are the signs in detail of the same vigour, cropping out in decora-



tion and sculptured features, which describe with a homely emphasis and rough power the customs and habits and occupations of craftsmen and ordinary working people—the carpenter and mason, the husbandman and ploughman, each at his toil—together with many a tale and legend embodying the simple but fervent faiths and fears of the age.

We know that side of Gothic art. But there is a side to that art which we know less well, or of which at least the meaning is less apparent, a side which answers to the vein of mystical emotion out of which monasticism drew its vitality; there is a note of strange, deep colour, solemn and dreamy, which seems in the Gothic interior, amid the strenuous active lines and battling vaults, to fill much the same place as the mystical faculty filled in mediaeval life, rather, that is, to bathe it with a light from elsewhere than actually to belong to its own composition. In England we are badly off for early stained glass, for glass of the thirteenth century, and we are not therefore generally very familiar with its character and effect. We must visit the French cathedrals to appreciate its full significance. The cathedrals of France—Rheims, Le Mans, Bourges, above all Chartres—differ from our English cathedrals, from York and Canterbury, in that the quantity and completeness of their glass is sufficient to envelop the whole interior in a single scheme of solemn chiaroscuro and vivid glowing tints, whereas the English examples are of so fragmentary a nature that they cannot achieve anything approaching unity of effect, and a few isolated and local spots or shafts of colour is all they amount to. It is impossible to estimate the effect of stained glass under such conditions. The difference between such isolated colour-spots and a colour-scheme which floods a whole church with its rich beams and dark shadows is the difference between the measured approval, or admiration, which we bestow on a particular object, and one of those overmastering emotional moods which seem imposed upon us by our whole environment and

which we accept as unquestioningly as the air breathed by us. No one can submit to the influence of one of the great French interiors without perceiving that this total emotional effect was the end aimed at and steadily held in view. It is an effect at once so powerful and at the same time so markedly peculiar in character and quality that it is impossible to doubt that it expressed or embodied a human impulse, an impulse of like quality to itself, in the life of that age which craved and found this outlet for itself in art.

Mr. Lewis Day, in his admirable work on stained windows, speaks from time to time of the profound emotional influence of the great examples of the art. "To sit there," he writes of Chartres, "upon some summer afternoon, when the light is softened by a gentle fall of rain, is to be thrilled by the beauty of it all. It is as though, in a dream, you found yourself in some huge cavern, lit only by the light of jewels, myriads of them gleaming darkly through the gloom. It is difficult to imagine anything more mysterious, solemn or impressive." He adds the tale told of a child "sitting for the first time in his life in some French church, awed by the great rose window facing him, when all at once the organ burst into music, and it seemed to him, he said, as if *the window spoke*. Words could not better express than that," adds Mr. Day, "the powerful impression of early mosaic glass, the solemnity of its beauty, the way it belongs to the grandeur of the great church, the something deep in us vibrating in answer to it."

Uncertain and vague in form and outline, conveying no very distinct meaning, telling no story, yet of the utmost intensity and richness of colour, these early windows are in their nature sensuous rather than intellectual. They address themselves to the feelings. And this they do purposely and deliberately. Many people seem to imagine that the aim of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century craftsman was to embody in his window the meaning of a picture, to depict a scene, and that this was

done rudely and imperfectly owing to his imperfect technical skill. But the purpose of the early craftsman was not this at all. In the methods he adopted he was not influenced by any consideration of facility of form delineation, but simply by the results he was able to obtain in colour. Rich, deep, and pure colour was the end he sought. If the methods he employed refused to adapt themselves to the representation of form, that did not trouble him provided they yielded the right results in colour. Colour, not form, was his object, as the means he adopted as well as the effects he achieved prove. Early glass, or pot metal, as it is called, was obtained by fusing the molten glass in the pot with metallic oxide, by which means the glass was coloured all through and the depth and lustre of tint obtained which are its peculiar characteristics. But such glass lent itself necessarily very clumsily to the purposes of draughtsmanship. Each particle of colour was represented by a separate fragment of glass, and each fragment had to be separately leaded into its place in the general design. It follows that the subject-matter of the early windows is of the rudest possible description, yet so little does this signify that, as every one knows, early glass can be used to this day in collected fragments and particles, without any regard to the original design, to form a mere blazonry of splendid colour. Beautiful effects have been obtained in this way by collecting broken bits of early glass and patching them together. So far as subject-matter is concerned they are, of course, a mere jumble, but they attract none the less powerfully by their beauty of colour, and the fact that they thus attract by colour when all significance of form has departed—nay, the fact that the obliteration of form has not apparently diminished in any way the charm of such windows—is a remarkable testimony to the truth of Mr. Day's assertion that "the beauty of early glass is in its colour, not in its form."

Each age adopts or invents the artistic methods suited to express its own feelings or ideas. The mediaeval age

relied chiefly on the pot-metal system of colouring glass, which was purely a colour-system. Later, as the Renaissance approached and men inclined more and more to trust reason and intellect, when the tendency was for ideas to grow more definite and less emotional, processes were developed in accordance with these new requirements. These processes consisted in colouring the glass by painting or staining its surface by hand and then burning the hand-painting into the glass. By these means a facility and freedom in drawing figures and depicting scenes was attained which had been quite absent from the earlier method. It was no longer necessary to use separate glass fragments framed in leaden strips for each tint. Gradations of colour and the modelling of forms could now be freely rendered by hand. The glass was no longer colour, but a surface to be coloured. I do not mean to infer that the pot-metal system and surface-painting system were the inventions respectively of the mediaeval and Renaissance periods. Surface-painting of a very simple kind was early understood and practised. The "paint" consisted of powdered flint glass and peroxides of iron and manganese ground up together and laid on with a long-haired pencil or "tracing-brush." The process secured dark or opaque effects, and could be used to indicate detail (hair, eyes, eyebrows, etc.), in black on a paler ground. It could also render small lights by blocking in the background and leaving the desired portion clear. These were aids to the delineation of form, but were of a very rude and primitive kind. Nevertheless they represented the side of the subject on which a rational and scientific temperament would naturally concentrate, for they contained obvious suggestions of a capacity to draw or depict scenes and objects.

Again an early expedient, not entirely unknown to the mediaeval craftsman, but not used extensively until the pictorial ideal was developed, was the "flashing" of glass, by which a thin slab of coloured glass was fused to



a slab of white and the surface then ground through where required to give brilliant light effects. Early in the fourteenth century another discovery was made, the discovery namely that white glass could be stained yellow by the application of a solution of silver. This not only produced a certain variety of pale or rich yellow, but was extremely ductile as a medium. It could be laid on in broad washes or used to depict the most delicate details, and being a surface stain was of course quite independent of the restrictions of leads. Most decisive of all, during the sixteenth century various metallic oxides were used to produce more or less transparent colours. These were known as enamel colours to distinguish them from the pot-metal colours. This of course enabled the artist to paint his picture on the surface of the glass with hitherto undreamt-of facility. During the early period the only actual colour obtainable had been the solid stain. Now colours could be rendered by the brush. At last the artist had got what he wanted. He could depict a scene and tell a story. All these changes are in the same direction. Each invention adds to the ease of depicting form while it detracts from the capacity to render colour. To follow the processes of the age is to recognise beyond the possibility of doubt the direction in which the mind of man was tending. All the curiosity and alertness of intelligence that could be brought to bear upon the subject were devoted to the task of turning it into a vehicle for form, while no one cared, or, it would seem, even noticed, that by so doing they were totally destroying its efficiency as a vehicle for colour.

These changes made themselves felt in two directions. Form, subject-painting, the desire to depict a scene, to describe an event, became more and more the object of window-painting. Every feature and detail of dress and expression, the smile, the upturned gaze, the tear in the eye, the ringlets of golden hair are all microscopically delineated by the aid of the new expedients. But at the same time, unnoticed, as we



may suppose, and unregretted, for men's desires were turned elsewhere, the glory of colour of the old windows faded away. Surface-painting could render form freely, but it could not render colour as the old style had rendered it. Each age achieved that which it sought. The earlier age sought and achieved incomparable richness of colour, but left unsolved the problem of form. The later age took up that problem and solved it; but even while it was in the act of solving it, while its hand grew more facile and subtle, and its rendering of its subject matter more delicate, exact, and skilful, there was ebbing out of it all the time, surely and steadily, that deep and jewel-like glow which the earlier craftsmen had set their whole hearts upon attaining.

It is upon the earlier style that I wish to concentrate the reader's attention. It appears that, in the pursuit of pure colour, the early craftsman kept in view, as a test or standard of comparison, the colour of gems. They worked, Mr. Day tells us, in deliberate imitation of precious stones. The glass they turned out "actually went by the name of ruby, sapphire, emerald, and so on," and it was even fabled that sapphires themselves were ground down and mixed with the molten glass to give it its deep blue tint. Such a standard of comparison indicates the preference accorded in thirteenth-century work to the motive of colour. At the same time, while the glazier used gems as the test of his individual tints, it was not from any arrangement of gems that he had conceived the idea of coloured-glass design. The Byzantine enamellers, with the same end in view of making pure and perfect colours, had already produced work like enough in its methods to glazing to serve as a model. We have but to think, as Mr. Day reminds us, of a plaque of translucent Byzantine enamel and "imagine it magnified manyfold to realise how likely it is that it was from enamel the Gothic glaziers first took the idea of coloured windows." Mr. Day supports this conclusion with various arguments, into which I cannot here enter. But

indeed the derivation is, I believe, accepted. The Abbé Tercier, after pointing out that the art of staining glass arose in the neighbourhood of Limoges and under the influence of its famous school of enamellers, goes on to remark that there was a close connection of long standing between Limoges itself and Venice. A Venetian colony of glass-workers had established itself in Limoges as early as 979, through which the influence of the East on the Western school of enamellers was immediately exerted. Of course, the same influence—what we call the Byzantine influence—to a greater or less extent affected all Europe, but it was for the most part a fitful and variable influence. Wherever anything like direct contact with the East was set up it never failed to dominate Western artistic ideals, while at the same time the more untouched and remoter districts were almost entirely cut off from it. Herself profoundly Orientalised, Venice was as much the medium between East and West in matters of art as in matters of merchandise, and the close connection set up by Limoges with Venice was tantamount to a close connection with Constantinople. *Via* Venice the East darted into the heart of Europe a motive which was to produce great effects on European art.

What that motive was may be explained in a sentence. It was the recognition of colour as, in itself, a sufficing artistic ideal. What always distinguishes Oriental colour is its own glow and richness, apart from definite meanings or explanatory purposes attaching to it. The East feeds on colour and is content. The West regards colour as a property of things, and thinks of it in connection with the objects to which it belongs. The difference is the difference between intellectual and sensuous or emotional apprehension. An intellectual people, a people whose instinct it is to examine and define, to analyse the contents, construction, uses, and significance of all it sees, will utter itself in the artistic sphere in the arts of form. Form is the intellectual act of definition, and whoever observes any great and decisive movement of intellectual

development against a background of comparative barbarism—such, for example, as the Greek intellectual movement or the Renaissance intellectual movement—will remark that the awakened intellectual sense expresses itself at once in art in a new and almost startling realisation of the significance of form. And yet the very strength of this perception of the value of form carries with it a danger to another great artistic vehicle. A people whose intelligence is always active, always scrutinising, separating, defining, a people in love with the quality of form in things, will inevitably subordinate emotional considerations to its own intellectual mode of apprehension. But what does that mean? It means that such a people, the more it exalts form, the more it will tend to treat colour as a mere attribute of form and one of the means of distinguishing and appraising it. Such a use of colour cannot and does not disengage its full power and influence, for it does not accord with the nature of colour. The nature of colour, considered in itself, is not intellectual, but emotional. Colour does not address itself to the understanding, but directly to the feelings, and only when it is subjected to form does it submit to an intellectual valuation. Then, indeed, the first consideration is that its meaning, or interpretation, should be correct, and that like a good adjective, it should rightly describe the form it belongs to. Its primary value under these circumstances ceases to be its own intrinsic, emotional value, and becomes the intellectual value which it derives from form.

Let the reader look around him anywhere in the West ; let him look at our clothes, our furniture, our ornaments, at our churches and cathedrals, or at the orderly streets of our great cities, and inevitably he will notice that the quality of form in things is the governing quality, that it is this which is brought out and articulated with care and accuracy, and that, if colour is used at all, it is used decoratively, or as it may be called descriptively—that is, in subordination to form and as a means for its more

attractive definition. But let him look around in the East and he will find the very opposite of this. It might seem that forms here have all been made of wax, so melted down are they as if by the hot sun's action. Not a line is true, not a surface smooth, not a shape exact. And as the forms have melted so have the colours run. Forms which are not strong and accurate cannot retain control over colour. It slips from their grasp. It ceases to be decorative and descriptive. The intellectual value it drew from form it loses, but it regains in the act its own intrinsic emotional value. I have spoken in an earlier chapter of the bazaars of old Arab or Persian cities and of the coloured twilight which reigns there. The passages are mere tunnels rudely scooped out ; through occasional gratings a beam or two struggles down into the interior ; the shops are holes in the wall, or smugglers' caves stuffed with rich bales and cargoes. Whence does the colour come ? You hardly know. Some comes from those heaps of carpets and glimmering gold embroideries which are half hidden in the shop-hole and half disgorged on to the ground without. Some is contributed by the turbans and garments of the silent-footed figures that drift past in the gloom. But, indeed, it seems to belong to nothing very definitely. It burns in the shadows and dies away in the darkness, pertaining apparently less to particular objects than to the glow in which the whole interior is wrapt.

Such is a glimpse of Oriental life—a glimpse of the surroundings which Eastern habit unconsciously fashions for itself to dwell in. How is the same idea uttered in art ? We have stood under the mosaic domes and vaults of Byzantine churches. Here, again, is the twilight of rich colour. Through the dark shadows the gold of the background reddens, blurred with darker tints of inlaid figures of saints or angels. But these colours define no objects. There are, strangely enough, no objects to define. The old exact forms, architraves, archivolts, cornices, and the rest of them have disappeared. Their place is



taken by deep-curved apses and softly hollowed domes and simple ponderous vaults, the undulations of which seem all to mingle and fuse together in a single over-arching, uneven canopy, kneaded out of colour and dark gold. How wonderful and deep is the effect of such tints—tints which awaken no particular and discriminating attention, but which blend with the darkness and the shadows, which enfold us in their mystery and richness, and which, insensibly to ourselves, call forth in us a mood like to their own aspect !

The influence of the East is always of the same kind. What is the secret of Venetian colour ? What is the difference between a Tintoretto or a Titian and any two of the Florentines ? It is obvious enough. The Florentines use colour in the Western way, to define form, while the Venetians use it in the Eastern way, for its own sake—that is to say, they create a powerful suffusion of colour and chiaroscuro, in the mingled richness and darkness of which the limitations of form are consumed and obliterated.

We have taken three examples of Oriental colour—an ordinary Eastern bazaar, a church of the style adapted from the colour-instinct of the Persians, and the school of painting of a city knit to the East by the dearest ties of dependence and self-interest. All these are alike : where shall we find a fourth to add to their number ? The reader is standing inside the west door of Chartres. The place is dark, or at least very dim, but the gloom that pervades it is shot and indescribably mingled with the beams of ruby and azure and golden brown cast by the multitude of thirteenth-century windows by which the interior is rather coloured than lit. “ It is as though, in a dream, you found yourself in some huge cavern, lit only by the light of jewels, myriads of them gleaming darkly through the gloom.” The reader does not need to be told that this kind of colouring is essentially Oriental in character. He is quite prepared for Mr. Day’s statement that “ coloured glass comes to us from the East,”



and the Venetian connection with Limoges falls into place as an expected link and opportune solution. The fact is that stronger than any extrinsic evidence is the intrinsic evidence of the colour itself. All that we said about colour for colour's sake, as contrasted with colour used to define form, applies here with signal force. I have already pointed out that the methods of the early glaziers were especially adapted to the attainment of the deep, jewel-like tints in which they delighted, but were very ill adapted to the representation of form. The effects that reign in Chartres Cathedral were latent in the first processes of the art of window-staining. They guided the craftsman's earliest experiments and drew him on step by step along the road that ended here. Alike in the original motive and in this its final achievement, the value of colour, the power of colour to suffice and satisfy, is the guiding thought. That is the Oriental note in art as in life. In the East colour is stronger than form. In the West form is stronger than colour. But when we say this let us not forget what we imply by it. We imply that in the West the intellectual mood of defining and formulating predominates, whereas in the East the emotional and contemplative mood predominates. The visitor to Chartres will feel this. He will feel that not only have we here a very striking and wonderful exhibition of colour, but that the colour is of a kind which affects him in a peculiar way, which appeals with force to one particular side of his nature. He will, in short, acknowledge the emotional influence of a style of colouring which seems by its own intensity to have burnt up the forms and shapes of things, and therefore addresses itself wholly to the feelings and not at all to the understanding. I gather that Mr. Day, appreciative critic though he is, rather resents, or is sometimes a little oppressed by, the emotional character of early glass. "A sense of colour in which there is no too definite form to break the charm" has its fascination for him; but yet "there comes a point in our satisfaction in mere beauty," he thinks, "at

which we feel the want of a meaning in it." The remark is interesting, and worth quoting because it represents the typical Western standpoint in matters of art. All the same it does not convey his final judgment ; it was spoken in a moment of mental restlessness. He, and we too, have in us a mood which can respond to the mood depicted there in the church. We feel with him that " something deep in us " vibrates in answer to the mystery, the brooding richness and the splendour of the twilight in which we stand. How should we not feel it ? We, too, are of the East, and, cased as we are in Western intellectualism and scientific tricks, there are fountains of feeling not dried up in us. Something deep in us, something deeper than Athens, deeper than the Renaissance, recognises the inarticulate language of the soul. It is the East, the echo of what we once were. We have not lost that most ancient heritage. We retain it, but as a subconscious instinct only. It has never in the West blossomed into spontaneous expression. Whenever in art the signs of it are seen, whenever the beauty of art resides " in its colour, not in its form," traces of a direct inspiration from the East will be discernible.

I have more than once suggested that the element of emotional contemplation which runs through mediaevalism strikes one as more or less at variance with the character of the robust and strenuous mediaeval life. Personally I feel the same about stained glass and Gothic architecture. There is an incongruousness of idea between them. It may not detract from the effect of either, but it is there. The root idea of Gothic is visibly articulated construction. Its whole system of lofty vaults, precariously balanced and pressing each against each, is an active system of thrust and counter-thrust, and the significance of the architecture depends largely on the vividness with which it explains, by the intercommunication of its lines and ribs and buttresses, its structural intentions to the onlooker. So vividly does the style do this that the forces which animate it seem visibly to

flow off its vaults, like streams from mountain sides, till they converge and run to earth in the piers and flying buttresses which support the whole structure. The whole effect, indeed, of Gothic architecture is so much felt to depend on this process of vivid articulation that it is the boast of the style that even its ornament and slightest decorative details are in their nature structural—that is to say, that they serve but to emphasise and draw attention to the main constructive design.

The elaborate system of adjustment, the equilibrium, built up and calculated, of thrust and counter-thrust throughout those lofty curves and vaults, the construction of all the struggling and expanding forces of the edifice on certain fortified points are characteristics which proclaim the building before us to be, before all things, a study of structural form. It is visited by those rich beams of colour, but they are not—it is the difference between the Gothic and Byzantine styles—part of it. So it is with the life of the age. Our ancestors were doers, not dreamers. The future of the race lay less in the cloisters than in the market-place and workshop. I think, then, that if, before we had any knowledge of the ultimate effects of Gothic, its structural idea had been explained to us, so that we realised how much the style depends for its effect on the clear articulation of its constructive purpose, we should be very far from associating such an idea with the semi-darkness and dim, rich mystery of such an interior as that of Chartres. Between the vigorously expressed structural scheme and the twilight of rich colour which veils and obscures it there is a certain profound incongruity, and that incongruity is precisely the same in character as that which seemed to exist in mediaeval life itself between its strenuously active impulses and the mystical, contemplative instinct which so strangely haunted it.

In what I have here said I have endeavoured, necessarily very imperfectly and briefly, and trusting much to the reader's willingness to eke out my argument with his

own supplementary knowledge, to indicate the common origin and natural connection between something in mediaeval life and something in mediaeval art. We have, on the one hand, a vein of mysticism running through mediaeval life, which may be traced, through many ducts and channels, mainly Hellenic, and of which Neoplatinism is perhaps the chief, to its home in the East. On the other hand, we have a suffusion of glowing colour, an equally marked and peculiar trait in mediaeval art, which may also be traced back to a like source. Further, between these two, between the mystical mood which deliberately excludes the actual that it may indulge its inclination for purely emotional contemplation, and the gorgeous yet solemn colour-scheme which dissolves and veils the exactitudes of form-definition that it may make its sensuous influence the more felt, there exists, as it seems to me, a similitude of character which all susceptible minds must feel and acknowledge. When we find two such phenomena as these confronting and, as it were, balancing each other, living and flourishing together, and together declining and dying out, is it a forced conclusion to suppose that they are united as cause and effect, and that the emotional scheme of colour, as I may call it, is the expression in terms of art of the mysticism in mediaeval life?

There remains one word to add in support of this conclusion. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England were centuries of gradual preparation for the Renaissance. Those centuries are marked, in life, by the secularisation of the national mind and character, and the development of rational habits of thought. In the branch of art we are concerned with they are signalised by the fading of the earlier rich and solemn colouring and the substitution of a style in which the significance of form and subject is the ruling motive. I have heard many explanations of this artistic change. To me the satisfying explanation is that colour in art died out and gave place to form because in life mysticism was dying out and giving place to intellectualism.

Would the reader like to ask himself how it is with us now ? We realise the beauty and feel the influence of these old windows far more than we used to do. It was but lately they were reckoned barbaric ; now they are prized at their weight in gold. But what else ? Can any one read contemporary literature without being aware that the spirit of mysticism is yearly more and more influencing and colouring the mind of the present age ? It is natural that the awakening of the old emotion in us should put us in sympathy with its own artistic influence. But from whence do they come, to-day, these mystical currents of emotion ? They do not arise out of Western habits of thought, they are foreign to the intellectual and scientific inclination of our own mind. They come from the East which is their home and dwelling-place, from the East which contributes these emotions to life just as it contributes its own dark and glowing colours to art.



## CHAPTER XIII

### VENICE AND THE RENAISSANCE

Not only were Venice's culture and ideas and civilisation generally taken from the East, but the actual temperament of her people and all the intimate habits of their daily lives have the same origin. To the very core of her being she is sensuous rather than intellectual. This is the view of life which her own famous colour school of art expresses.

VENICE's position in regard to the Renaissance is peculiar among the States of Italy. From the main current of Renaissance ideas, from the intellectualism of the age, she stood apart. She offered, indeed, to all men of letters, to all poets, students, and scholars, a ready and hospitable asylum. She welcomed them warmly and was proud of their sojourn in her midst. The security, the splendour, and the repose of the floating city, moored near to, yet separated from, the mainland, rendered her a quite ideal asylum for honoured thinkers and writers. Hither came Uberti and the critical Erasmus, and Galileo and Sarpi and Petrarch and Giordano Bruno and Tasso. Here was established, but by foreigners, towards the end of the fifteenth century, the celebrated Aldine Press, the effect of which was to give solidity and consistency to the new learning. Venice through these years figures as a patroness of culture, but yet not one man of real intellectual eminence issued from the richest and most magnificent city of Italy. She was fond of entertaining men of genius, but she never bred them. She never experienced that "sacred thirst" with which the rest of Italy "sucked at the flagon" of the new knowledge. We have to descend some way in the scale of intellectual achievement before

we come to Venice's contributions, nor were these the fruit of minds that convey an inspiration and an impetus, minds whose fervent love of ideas and delight in their own powers of thinking infect others, and so point the way to wider researches and completer enlightenment. Very little, in truth, of the mental excitement, the inward quickening and stirring, which led to what we call the "intellectual awakening" of the Renaissance, was felt in Venice. Lapped in a semi-Oriental luxury, a marvel and a show, the gorgeous city seems, as our imagination takes in the extent of the intellectual movement which was simmering and seething among the cities of the mainland, to be sunk in a dream and almost to have lost touch with the thought of the age in the contemplation of her own splendour and beauty. Her attitude is the attitude of an indolent and gracious woman reclining in the shadow of lime trees on an August afternoon, eating apricots and listening to a dispute among scholars.

Yet Venice, too, had her idea, had, so to speak, a philosophy of life of her own. Sensuous rather than intellectual, her character in many respects strikes one as more Oriental than Western. Her ties with the East must never be forgotten. There exists to this day a confident tradition, treated by many as an historical fact, that her population is descended from a colony of emigrants from Asia Minor. Mr. Hazlitt, in his excellent *History of the Republic*, countenances to some extent the theory. "There seems," he says, "to be some plausibility in the suggestion that a colony, passing in the course of migration from their native soil to Asia Minor, proceeded thence in process of time to Northern Italy, on the shores of which they founded numerous settlements." These colonists, Mr. Hazlitt adds, "were called Tyrrhenians or Etruscans," and from their settlements round the mouth of the Po the Venetian stock was ultimately derived. If there is truth in the tradition the Venetians were of the same blood as the merchants of Tyre and Carthage, an offshoot of that wonderful trading

race whose operations embraced the Mediterranean and extended to our own coasts. Various scraps of evidence occur in support of such a suggestion. In all her instincts and phases of development Venice is true to type. She has commerce in the blood. One can imagine a second Tyre starting business again in the Adriatic. Again, the very look of her people, their fleshy forms and faces, their almond eyes, and those big noses of theirs, which Molmenti insists upon as the feature which most distinguishes them, all verify a Semitic origin. They had innate in them, moreover, that race's instinctive passion for gorgeousness, and probably the aspect of Babylon and Nineveh, as of Tyre and Sidon later, was of much the same ostentatiously sumptuous character as distinguished the splendour of Venice. I have always thought that Venice's spontaneous reaching out to, and ready comprehension of, the East is rendered the more intelligible by the supposition of racial affinity. We must remember that not only did the greatness and very existence of the city come to hang upon her Eastern trade, but that in all matters of taste and art and culture her ideas were prompted by Eastern example and Eastern teaching. All of us must be struck by the strange spectacle of this floating, lit-up city, upon which, all through the centuries called "dark," there rests so strong and mysterious a glow of light and colour. Poets have insisted on what there is of fairy-like and magical in this appearance, and their view is natural; for the causes which wrought her splendour being unseen and remote their effects have almost an air of enchantment. Venice, indeed, does not belong to the West either in ideas or aspect. She still appears, even in her bleached decay, almost like a bit of the East that, detached, has floated hither. In her great days, to the eyes of Europe bent upon her as she lay out at sea, she must have seemed like some great argosy that, heaped with Eastern riches,

Hangs in the air, by equinoctial gales  
Close sailing from Bengala.

And when, from what is spectacular, we turn to what is essential in her life we are struck by the same deep Oriental tinge. Life for Venice was no subject to be reasoned over, explained, and analysed, but something to be savoured and enjoyed. If she did not search out the meaning of things she laid herself open to a sensuous impression of them. If she did not reason acutely she felt deeply. This emotional interpretation of life has ever been more characteristic of East than West, and for that reason, perhaps, is apt to be misunderstood by the West and unduly depreciated, as if the neglect of intellectual effort must of necessity imply a self-abandonment to mere lazy voluptuousness. Thus Mr. Howells in his *Venetian Life* tells us how, in spite of his interest in and love of Venice, the life there seemed to cut him off from all the recognised and natural incentives of his age and race.

Old habits of work, old habits of hope made my endless sojourn irksome to me, and almost intolerable, when I ascertained fairly and finally that, in my desire to fulfil long-cherished, but, after all, merely general designs of literary study, I had forsaken wholesome struggle in the currents where I felt the motion of the age, and had drifted into a lifeless eddy of the world, remote from incentive and sensation.

No doubt if we accept the Western philosophy of intellectualism in the spirit in which Mr. Howells accepts it, we shall agree that a city so out of the movement as Venice is cut off from real life. But Mr. Howells wrote this little book of his over fifty years ago, and many changes have occurred in the interval. It is questionable if Europe is quite as satisfied with her intellectualism as she was half a century ago, or just as sure that it affords, or ever can afford, her a solution of life in which she can rest and be content. It is even conceivable that the contrary philosophy, the philosophy of feeling and of a profoundly emotional apprehension of the nature of things, may find itself able by and by to get a word in. No one who has observed—and who can fail to have observed?—the

strong interest and curiosity manifested nowadays by Europe in all phases of Eastern thought, will find this an extravagant conjecture, and, if this is so, Venice's point of view will be sure to gain in interest and significance for us. Let us endeavour, then, to discern more clearly what there was peculiar in this point of view, and in what manner its characteristics have found their expression in Venetian art.

As we know, the Renaissance was remarkable for two things: an outburst of intellectual activity and an outburst of artistic activity. Both these movements were focussed in Florence. It was in Florence that the first signs of the great "intellectual awakening" occurred, and as long as the movement remained in charge of Italy it was Florence which presided over and controlled it. Her place in the Renaissance has often been compared to the place of Athens in classic thought. Take away Athens and there is no such thing as the Greek intellectual influence. Take away Florence and there is no such thing as the intellectual influence of the Renaissance. Athens and Florence are in a singular degree *sources* of intellectual vigour and inspiration. Many cities have possessed the intellectual character, and in particular, of course, the great university cities, which have made intellectual culture the aim of their existence, have possessed it. But there is a difference between culture deliberately pursued and a spontaneous impulse in the direction of enlightenment and thought. Athens and Florence did not merely influence the world, as Padua and Bologna, or Paris and Oxford have influenced it, by teaching and turning out scholars. They influenced it by showing it how delightful and infinitely enjoyable a thing it is for man to exercise his intellectual faculties. Of the ultimate fruits of this kind of activity—of the discoveries, inventions, and researches of modern times—they knew nothing. Others in these things have excelled them. But these others have been inspired by their example, and to this day it revives within us the early



delight in intellectual activity to turn back to the manifestations of that activity in the life of Athens and Florence.

And pre-eminent as sources of intellectual inspiration, Athens and Florence are pre-eminent in the arts of form. Classic art at its best and most representative is Athenian, is the art of the age of Pericles, and classic art is essentially an art of form. No visions of rich suffusions of colour, melting down the austerity of form and blending under the influence of chiaroscuro into great emotional effects, cross the mind at the mention of classic art. There is nothing mystical in that art. Its aim is perfect definition. Those who have studied the delicate, the almost imperceptible inflections which pervade the form of a Doric temple will know to what lengths this love of perfect definition could carry the Greeks. Second only to architecture in this respect stands sculpture. In the enthusiasm with which it was prosecuted, no less than in the perfection which it attained, sculpture declares itself as the appropriate art-language of classical life. Clear-cut, exact, the sworn foe of the mystical and the indefinite, it bodies forth the classical ideal of thought and conduct. The success it achieved is due to its finding in the life of the period the exact nourishment it required. It is an example of a highly intellectualised art feeding on life at its most intellectualised moment.

That moment could never be quite reproduced. The Italian Renaissance might awaken again the old intellectual love of defining, analysing, comprehending, but it was beyond its power to repose upon and rest satisfied with its own definitions. There had been poured into life since the classic age ideas which intellect could not handle or control, which lent themselves to no intellectual definition; and these ideas, which were indefinable and yet refused to be cast out, are, in the sculpture of the Renaissance, a perpetually disturbing influence. Renaissance sculpture is always more or less excited, always

more or less capricious and experimental. It has lost the old calmness, serenity, and certitude. Intellect has no longer the same sure control of life that it had. This, in Renaissance sculpture as compared with classic, is a source of weakness. But yet, in spite of these qualifications, the intellectual revival of the Renaissance was so perfectly genuine an affair, intellectualism was so truly the vital force of that age, that sculpture had, for the first time since the classic epoch, the power it needed behind it, and its own vitality was proportionate. Florence, naturally, being the centre and source of Renaissance intellectualism, became the centre and source of Renaissance sculpture. Culture and the love of ideas were spread through Italy and Europe by Florentine thinkers, poets, and men of letters. In the same way Professor Bode explains, in his work on Florentine sculpture, how that art was carried abroad by Florentine artists. After pointing out that "Florence is the home of modern art," and that, "in no branch of art has Florence so unqualified a claim to this pre-eminence as in sculpture," he goes on to show that it was the superfluity of this kind of genius in Florence which nourished the rest of Europe, and that Florence "could afford, out of her abundance, to supply not only Italy but the rest of the continent" with instruction in this department of art. Thus in Florence as in Athens, the outburst of delight in intellectual activity, in the intellectual exercise of analysing, defining, and identifying, was the impulse which inevitably took effect on sculpture, and breathed life into that great art of form which feeds upon and expresses those mental processes.

If space allowed we could trace the similar development of mind and art. We could follow throughout the Florentine Renaissance an increase of intellectual vigour, lucidity, and power moving in step with a constantly increasing precision and certitude in the art of sculpture. And not only could we trace this development in sculpture, the art of form, but we could trace it very clearly in painting, into which form enters as an ingredient only.

For the effect of the mental bias prevailing in Florence was immediately to bring this ingredient into prominence in painting and give it the ascendancy. In Florentine painting form is the governing factor: in other words, its motives are conceived as ideas. From the first definite forward movement as initiated by Giotto, the instinct of Florentine painting was to define, to say something definite. It is a painting backed up all along by fine intellectual conceptions. And here again it would be a study of no small interest to observe the stages by which, as the intellectual capacity for defining and realising and comprehending grew and increased, so, and by similar stages, the art of painting, the capacity for representing things in their real forms, grew likewise, until the old Byzantine helplessness was entirely cleared away and man and Nature appeared in their natural semblances. This was the process which gradually fitted Florentine painting to become the appropriate vehicle of intellectual ideas, and just as Europe put on Florentine ideas so it put on in due course the Florentine ideals of painting too. Mr. Berenson has drawn attention to the fact that it was Florentine painting only which was destined to expand and hand down a progressive tradition, and that all schools which did not draw from this source had the mark of provinciality and were out of harmony with the mental development of Europe and so destined to be short-lived.

Nevertheless, another point of view there is. An art may exist, has indeed existed, not intellectual, not tending to express itself in terms of form, yet nevertheless possessing its own powerful and permanent attraction because based on something in human nature not less enduring than intellect. In his *Florentine Painters* Mr. Berenson has pointed out the broad distinction between Florentine and Venetian painters. Bring the greatest names of both schools together and the difference, as he says, is striking. "The significance of the Venetian names is exhausted with their significance as painters. Not so

with the Florentines. Forget that they were painters, they remain great sculptors; forget that they were sculptors, and still they remain architects, poets, and even men of science." Intellect is naturally versatile. A man of intellect brings to bear on all subjects the same faculties of comprehension which he exercises on any particular one. The versatility, therefore, of the essentially intellectual Florentine artists is not to be wondered at. But what are we to say of the Venetians? By contrast with their great rivals, their non-intellectual character is at once apparent. Not only are they themselves lacking in intellectual versatility, but their work in their own particular line as painters is lacking in intellectual interest and power. By contrast with the fine and keen intelligence which is spread over Florentine canvases, Venetian pictures are stupid. And the more thoroughly Venetian they are the more stupid they become. Down to about the end of the fifteenth century, Venetian painting was governed entirely from the mainland. It was Italian, not Venetian, and its painters, Alvise Vivarini, Carpaccio, the Bellini, are intelligent in the intellectual sense. But directly we come to the great colourists this intellectual interest dies out.<sup>1</sup> It would be odd, indeed, if it did not. For now painting becomes for the first time Venetian. It is nourished on Venetian life, and in Venetian life, by contrast with the vivid alertness and mental sensitiveness of Florentine life, we miss just the same quality which we miss in the art. We miss the eager, acute conversations, the give-and-take of wit and thought, the play of mind: in a word, the intellectualism which so pervades the life of the city on the Arno.

But if this goes out of Venetian art, what takes its place? If Venetian art is not intellectual, what is it, and to what is its strength due? The answer, of course,

<sup>1</sup> Titian, of course, is the great exception. In him more nearly than in any other painter the emotional possibilities of colour and the intellectual possibilities of form are reconciled and combined. He is almost as much a Florentine as he is a Venetian.



w<sub>1</sub> be that Venetian art is an art of colour ; its strength lies there ; this it is that has taken the place of form. It has been observed that if you call a difficulty by a name it disappears, and that seems to be the case in the present instance. We call the attraction of Venetian art colour, and think we have explained it. But of what nature is that attraction, to what faculties does it appeal and what was there particular and consummate in the Venetian use of it ? We know how many-sided and various are the interests belonging to form ; how full of meaning and subtle significance and keenly observed characteristics it can be ; how infinitely suggestive in its interpretation. In Venetian art colour is the substitute for all this, and we are content to call it colour and have done with it. Might it not occur to us that an attraction which is capable of rivalling and, as some think, even eclipsing the great intellectual attraction in art, should itself be susceptible of some further explanation ; that the appeal it makes to us and the effect it has upon us must be more or less intelligible ? Every one is familiar with Mr. Berenson's explanation of the influence of the arts of form. Mr. Berenson's own mental bias, it may be noted in passing, is essentially intellectual : he distinguishes and separates with a touch as fine as that of Mino da Fiesole. His theory of "tactile values," as a test of excellence in painting, is expressly based on the recognition that it was "upon form, and form alone" that the "great Florentine masters concentrated their efforts." It elaborates an explanation of the stimulating and life-enhancing effects of form in art, the importance of which, by German critics especially, has been more fully recognised than acknowledged. But where are we to find the corresponding explanation of the effects of colour ?

I know of none, yet I believe that one is possible. I believe the Venetian use of colour stands for a criticism of life every bit as forcible and definite as the Florentine use of form, only more difficult to formulate owing to the fact that the Venetian philosophy has so fallen into



abeyance as to be hardly intelligible to us. We have grown so accustomed to living from the intellectual side of our nature that we scarcely understand what is meant by living from its sensuous side. We do not admit that sensuous impressions may be as valuable guides to truth as intellectual definitions, that feeling is often as illuminating as thinking. Our own hold upon truth being rational and intellectual, we are prone to conclude there is no other. The consequence is that when we come to deal with a subject of sensuous character we perpetually take hold of it by that which is accidental or superficial in it, and miss what is essential. Thus, in the case of Venice, we find Western writers constantly dwelling on the frivolous and corrupt aspects of the city's life, on her carnivals and carousals, the splendour of her pageants, her unrestrained and wanton luxury, and all the marks of that enervating voluptuousness which by degrees drained the vigour out of her, as though the whole history of the State for the last four hundred years of its existence were bound up in these extravagances. It is an error. Sensuality is the disease which attacks sensuousness, but it is not the same thing as sensuousness. Underneath Venetian sensuality, underneath all the symptoms of corruption and decay, there existed that which was being corrupted, that which was gradually decaying. This was her sensuous susceptibility, her capacity for deep feeling. Throughout Venetian history this is the factor which plays the chief part. And as it plays the chief part in her life, so it plays the chief part in her art.

I have called Venice Oriental. Now it is to be observed that, generally speaking, the whole system of discipline and control common to European States is lacking to Eastern ones. Progressive governments, popular liberty, representation by franchise, parliament, the direction and control by the citizens of the legislative and executive functions, all these things, clearly the outcome of the practical intellectual faculty, and which have come to seem to us inseparable conditions of the health

and vigour of society, are conditions which have always been wanting to Oriental States. From the earliest development of Western civilisation it has been dimly felt that the way of citizenship was the way of life. We watch our young English boroughs struggling for the free exercise of their rights as we watch an infant kicking out with its arms and legs. These are signs of vitality. Let the sense of the value of their rights and privileges be lost to our citizens and we can scarcely imagine but that all national vigour and social health must go with it. And yet Oriental States, somehow or other, with none of these preservatives, have been healthy and vigorous and long-lived. What gave Egypt and Assyria their national cohesion and kept the life in them fresh and strong? What constituted the social bond in those societies, and why did they not, lacking the ties which we rely on, dissolve into anarchy? And so, too, what was the secret preservative of the strength of the old Indian principalities, and how did they succeed in handing down from generation to generation a social unity unwasted and unimpaired?

Oriental communities have safeguards of their own. They may be non-intellectual, but they are as a rule intensely emotional. Careless of self-government, they are liable, under despotic oppression, to fits of furious passion which result commonly in the annihilation of the despot and his instruments, and which have the effect, like periodical thunderstorms, of clearing the air for the time being. But chiefly the strength of such societies consists in the instinctive susceptibility and responsiveness of all their members to every kind of natural appeal, claim, and tie. The claims of old age upon youth, the claims of children upon their parents, the claims of blood relationship, of race, the sacred claims of hospitality and of religious obligations, all these and others of the kind are profoundly felt and instantly admitted. They become the natural bonds, therefore, of a society in character sensuous and emotional, and they take the place, and compensate for the absence, of those duties and civic

responsibilities which intellectualised societies recognise and discharge.

In all these respects the government of Venice inclines more to the Oriental than the European type. We call the Island State a Republic, but the name expresses rather the form than the spirit of her rule. There are to be found in Venetian history plenty of furious popular insurrections against tyranny and despotism; but these outbursts are followed up by no vindication of the rights of citizenship, by no provisions for the constitutional expression of the national will. The paroxysm of rage and resentment over, the people relapse into immediate indifference. If the reader will follow rapidly through the pages of Mr. Hazlitt's *History* the changes and development of Venetian government, he will be struck by the entire absence of what we may call the civic instinct on the part of the people. Already during the first four centuries of the life of the State, while yet political organisation was loose and each island practically ruled itself, we find everywhere the despotic habit asserting itself. Despite the theoretical rights of the public Assembly, each tribune was despot of his own island. "Each aspired to absolute and undivided authority," and each made such use of his opportunities that they "seldom bequeathed to those who came after them anything beyond the task of perpetuating civil discord and public misery." The institution of the Dogeship took place at the end of the seventh century, but, though the popular Assembly possessed and sometimes exercised the right of election, no constitutional control was exerted over the Doge's authority, and he was, as Mr. Hazlitt points out, "virtually and in all material respects, Autocrat of Venice."

Similarly during the long period between the decline of the tribunes and the rise of the aristocratic power the symptoms of the decay of even the rude attempts at freedom which had characterised the early stages of the Republic's career are unmistakable. There is

apparent a constant tendency of the ducal office to pass into the hands of a few powerful families. The practice of associating son with father in the occupation of office is the common means of evading a popular election. As time elapses the guidance of the Venetian State slips from the control of a people indifferent to the idea of self-government and becomes the prize to be plotted, intrigued, and fought for by a handful of patricians and their factions. In tracing the career of the ruling dynasties, as they may be called, of the Badoers, the Sanudi, and others, we seem to be following the incidents of some of the Byzantine dynasties of Constantinople. There are the same poisonings and plottings among the various pretenders to the throne, the same indifference of a people excitable indeed yet lacking the political faculty. Such an episode as the massacre of Sanudo IV.—the vicious depravity of the man himself, the fickle fury of the mob, the flame-like insurrection, the trapped doge peering out from behind his palace mercenaries at the scene of rage and violence, the direction by a few cool heads of the aimless popular fury, the storming of the palace and the casting forth of the tyrant's body to the dogs—such an episode, and it is one among a hundred such, is in keeping in every detail with Oriental traditions. It is, of course, true that deeds of violence, insurrections, massacres, and the like, are common to the early history of all European States and communities. But in these the violence is the outcome of the generally diffused struggle between popular liberty and feudal tyranny. It has an object, and is in a manner progressive. But in Venetian life the people seem to ignore altogether that profound impulse so operative in other European cities. As Mr. Hazlitt acutely remarks, "even their occasional resistance to tyranny, marked by deeds of horrid and dark cruelty, left no deep or enduring traces behind it. It established no principle. It taught no lesson." And this was in the centuries prior to the revolution of 1172 which definitely constituted the



aristocracy "the predominant element in the body politic."

The suppression or decline of the old ineffective public assemblies, and the institution of the first council, in which the chief Doge-supplying families had pooled their ambitions, and which rapidly passed under their exclusive influence, mark the moment of the almost explicit abandonment of the ideal of popular liberty as expressed in the government of the State. This revolution of the end of the twelfth century, worked by the aristocracy in its own interests, took place quietly and aroused no opposition. The people watched their chance of exercising direct control over their government pass from them without a murmur. It was a privilege they valued lightly, for they had never used it effectively. The steps and degrees by which the aristocracy confirmed and concentrated their power need not be followed here. They resulted, as the reader knows, in the concentration of all governing authority into the hands of a small and rigidly defined section of society ; in the formation of secret and intricate tribunals deliberating with closed doors ; in the elaboration of a whole system of silent espionage, which watched in all streets and sat at all tables, and overheard all conversations, and whispered its reports daily to its hidden organisers ; which dealt its blows quietly and swiftly ; which prompted the assassin's dagger and turned the key of secret dungeons. Briefly, it resulted in the consolidation of a government Oriental to the core in all its methods and instincts.

Characteristics which appear but fitfully in individuals frequently loom large in the life of the State. I touch on these aspects of Venetian history because they teach us to appreciate the meaning of that history. They help us, that is to say, to realise the alienation of the city from the intellectual West, and her close approximation in thought and feeling to the sensuous and emotional East. For a corresponding set of facts in private life we might go to the pages of Molmenti's history, where we should meet



with racial characteristics which would constantly transport us from West to East. I am not thinking only, or mainly, of that passionate love of shows and pageants which strikes the eye so forcibly, and on which historians are so fond of enlarging. Rather I am thinking of, to name an example or two, such indications of temperament as the position of women in the State, or the type of female beauty universally admired. Molmenti describes the type thus: "The hair is yellow like ripe corn, the eyes blue, the cheeks round and rosy, the lips full and moist, the breast snow-white. We may take it for certain," he adds, "that most of the models who sat to Venetian artists were women of the people, usually full-bodied and large-limbed; the Venetian temperament admired, as the ideal of female beauty, the slow movement, the abundant flanks, the full breasts of the noble matrons"—with much more to the same effect. That obviously is a quite Oriental estimate of womanhood. Quite Oriental too, or almost quite, is the position filled by women and the training and education of girls. There are no Catherine d'Estes and Vittoria Colonnas in Venice. "The ladies of noble families, who, like Oriental women, lived much at home and appeared in public only on great occasions to display their jewels and brocades, had but few opportunities of meeting strangers." The attachment of men to women "was not disturbed by sentimentality, but went straight to its mark, the enjoyment of physical beauty." Of Venetian girls, we are told, "they grow up in wearisome idleness, relieved only by needlework." They were "rarely allowed to leave the house, not even to go to church, and on the few occasions when they appeared in the street they were attended by armed servants and wore great veils of white silk which covered the head and breast."

What a difference between such a type of womanhood, unintelligent, uneducated, totally uninterested in the questions of the day, whether political or literary or artistic, scented and painted and jewelled, with abundant

flanks and all the rest of it, presiding contentedly in the retirement of the harem over the emotional resources of the establishment: what a contrast between such a one and the typical Florentine woman, so alert in mind, so keen yet so receptive, so sensitive to the finest shades of meaning, so fond of brilliant society, and so well qualified by tact and flexibility of intelligence to guide and control its conversation. Consider the two carefully, and is it not evident that they emerge out of a life different in its very composition? The Venetian woman represents a national character in which what is sensuous preponderates. The Florentine woman represents a national character in which what is intellectual preponderates. But the two are not Venetian and Florentine only; they are Eastern and Western. Every trait distinctive of Venetian womanhood is an Oriental trait, and, like the political facts already cited, illustrates her inveterate leaning towards Eastern habits of thinking and feeling.

What, then, I would emphasise is that in considering Venice and the Venetian character we must set aside our Western ideals, and regard the Venetians as in many respects more allied to the East in thought and feeling than to the West; the main feature of this difference being a strong tendency to a sensuous and emotional interpretation of life, and a strong repugnance to an intellectual interpretation of life; and I have dwelt on this distinction at some length because, art being always an expression of life, if the difference in life is clearly grasped, the difference, and the significance of that difference, in art will be readily appreciated. Explain the life, and the art will explain itself.

With this thought, then, in our minds, of a race of people sensuous and emotional, not intellectual, let us turn back for a moment to the characteristic Venetian painting. Down to the appearance of Giorgione Venetian art, as we have seen, was governed from the mainland, but with Giorgione there arises within Venice herself a school of art different in character from any hitherto

known, a school which we all recognise as Venice's especial contribution to art, and to which it is understood that we refer when we use the phrase "Venetian Art." The enthusiasm, amounting to a kind of creative ecstasy, with which the new style was welcomed and developed, sufficiently attests its genuinely national character. Giorgione, Titian, Palma, Lotto, Bonifazio, Tintoretto, Pordenone, Veronese, Paris Bordone, Catena, Ceriani, Jacopo Bassano, the names as the fifteenth century closes in come thick and fast as the big, hot drops of a thunderstorm. And, separated though they may be by different degrees of genius, these men are all alike. They all speak the Venetian language in painting. In their handiwork, and for the first time, a people sensuous and emotional, but not intellectual, utters itself in art. What is there singular in its mode of expressing itself?

All Venetian painters, big and little, have this characteristic in common: they all subordinate form to colour, instead of subordinating colour to form. I have already pointed out, but the reader will forgive me if I point out once more, that, where the characteristics of form—its precision and clear-cut definite statements—are kept to the front and vigorously insisted on, the *colour* of the form, whatever that may happen to be, becomes merely one of its several attributes. It becomes, that is to say, a property of form, a means of explaining and defining it, and its value as colour is subordinated to the effectiveness with which it performs that office. This is the decorative use of colour. But let the characteristics of form be blurred and kept in abeyance, and colour at once assumes a different value. It is now no longer a mere property of form; it is no longer used to express form. We think of and feel only the sensuous effect of the colour itself. This is the emotional use of colour. From this it follows that the amount of colour-effect attained by any given painting will be found to depend in the first place, not on the amount of colour used, but on which of the two ways just specified it is used in. The least touch of emotional

colour has more power, strikes a deeper chord in us, than any amount of decorative colour ; nor will the multiplying of the most emphatic hues ever make decorative colour emotional. So long as the ascendancy of form is insisted upon, you may load on the scarlet and crimson without ever getting beyond the same limit. Coloured objects you will attain to, not colour.

In this respect we are constantly led into quite absurd misapprehensions as to the amount of colour which pictures contain, for, as a little emotional colouring goes farther than a great deal of decorative colouring, we are apt always to think of it as more in itself. Really, it is the way it is used that makes it seem more. It is greater in effect but not in amount. Thus most of us certainly think the Venetian school of painting as singular in the amount and richness of the colour it employs. By great colourists we mean, or think we mean, men who use a great deal of colour. But as a matter of fact the majority of Venetian pictures are actually rather colourless. No school contains so large a percentage of black and dark brown to the square foot. Tintoretto—who may perhaps be taken as the central representative of the school, for Titian, the only personality at all comparable to him in scope and power, is of too intellectual a cast of mind to be quite typical of its spirit—Tintoretto, one of the greatest of colourists, is singularly sparing of vivid tints, and the general tenour of his colouring is dark almost to gloom. There is ten times as much show and brilliance of tint in any average half-dozen pre-Raphaelite pictures, nay, there is ten times as much show and brilliance of tint in the majority of pictures in any year's Royal Academy exhibition as is to be found in a representative half-dozen of Tintoretto's pictures. How easy it is to call to mind, in any modern exhibition, landscapes of brilliant yellow foliage and blue sky, azure sea with strip of golden sand, portraits of soldiers or hunting men in vivid scarlet tunics and coats. Tintoretto never used colour with anything approaching

this prodigality. No, the difference is not in amount but in kind. The painters we have named, the pre-Raphaelites and the Royal Academicians, use colour to define form. Sea or sand, the features of the landscape, the scarlet coat of the soldier tell for what they are. Their colour is a mere means to help one to realise their intellectual attribute of form. But Tintoretto's colouring is not of this kind. His pictures are for the most part dark and heavily shadowed. There are no clear-cut lines. The shapes of things are suggested rather than revealed. Under these conditions the colour employed seems not so much to define objects as to be imparted to the whole composition. Smouldering in the heart of the picture it communicates a glow which is felt even in the depths of the darkest shadows.

Not much colour, then, but suffused colour is the note of the Venetian school. And if we ask by what technical means this suffusion is obtained the answer is, by the use of a powerful scheme of chiaroscuro. For as it is the constant endeavour of form to restrict colour to its own dimensions, so there exists but one agent, which, mightier than form and able to blend, unite, or obscure all forms at its own pleasure, can set colour free of its thralldom. That agent is chiaroscuro, and hence it is that all really great colourists are distinguished by their mastery of light and shade, and by this are most unmistakably recognised. It is their business, and instinctively they know it, if they would secure the emotional and sensuous effects of colour, to soften down and obscure by the use of chiaroscuro the intellectual appeal of form. Tintoretto, whom we have instanced as the typical Venetian painter, is most typical in this. All the Venetians have the gift, it is the trade-mark of their guild, but Tintoretto's mastery of it has in it something unique. Every subject and kind of composition is ordered and disposed by Tintoretto wholly in terms of light and shade. He has no need to use, as the more intellectual Titian, and the less profoundly



emotional Veronese so often have to use, the masses and outlines of architecture to map out and control the composition of his larger canvases. The immensity of the "Paradiso," with its monotonous array of countless figures, is handled by him with the facility of an easel picture, and that solely by an arrangement of chiaroscuro.

It is this mastery of chiaroscuro which constitutes Tintoretto the greatest exponent of emotional painting that has yet lived. His pre-eminence over his great rival in this respect is indicated by the briefest comparison of their two renderings of the "Presentation in the Temple." Titian's picture is arranged by the help of the buildings in the background and the strongly defined flight of steps up which the Virgin mounts in the foreground. Tintoretto's is not arranged at all, at least not structurally, for the sombre figures that rudely frame the stairway tell only as dark masses against the paler background. Chiaroscuro only governs it, and chiaroscuro only invests it with its almost awful depth of emotion. Without attempting to summarise the merits of two such works it may be said with confidence that, as regards the force and directness of its emotional appeal, Titian's interpretation is cold compared to Tintoretto's, and that the latter's superiority in this respect consists in his greater mastery over chiaroscuro, his greater mastery over that tremendous agent whose function it is to tone down the uncompromisingly intellectual characteristics of form. There are critics, we know, who find in Tintoretto something turgid and melodramatic. This is partly due, perhaps, to the fact that, in modern art, criticism has arrived at that stage of intellectual dryness which has a natural suspicion of anything like strong feeling; but apart from that it may be conceded that Tintoretto was, on some occasions, and when dealing with certain subjects, liable to those kinds of excesses. They are the defects of the temperament he possessed. At his best, however, he paints in the perfect manner of a great colourist, letting loose without

effort the utmost sensuous resources of his medium. In Titian's works the chief colour notes, however effective, appear almost always to be calculated and arbitrarily introduced; with Tintoretto they are inevitable and seem to be there of their own accord, for they are part of the emotion of the whole picture.

Tintoretto's procedure seems to have been to choose, to begin with, if possible, a subject charged with emotion. He then proceeded to treat it according to its nature, that is to say, he toned down and obscured the outlines of form, and mapped out the subject instead in pale or sombre masses of light and shade. Under the control of this powerful scheme of chiaroscuro the colouring of the composition was placed, but its own character, its degree of richness or sobriety, was determined by the kind of emotion belonging to the subject. To use colour in this way, not with emotional force only, but with emotional truth, is to use it to perform one of the greatest functions that art can perform. It is to use it to open up the very heart of the meaning of a subject. I would instance "The Crucifixion" as a case in point. In the several groups of figures and faces there is nothing significant whatever. The picture lends itself to no intellectual estimate; all that may be dismissed. But yet so powerful and, above all, so terribly significant in its deep mystery and livid terror is the mighty scheme of chiaroscuro in which the scene is muffled, and so profoundly true to the emotions of the occasion are the dim and solemn hues which pervade the gloom, that all other renderings of this event seem, compared with this, to be beside the mark.

This is what is singular in the Venetian use of colour; and this system, on which the Venetian colourists worked, of creating an emotional atmosphere by the use of chiaroscuro and then charging it with colour, was precisely the system, as I have already pointed out, elaborated on a still grander scale by Byzantine architects. These drew their inspiration from the same source as the Venetians. Their

object was to express the sensuous Oriental temperament in terms of its own proper medium, colour ; and forthwith they deliberately and systematically set to work, to mitigate and tone down all those exactitudes of form which convey its intellectual appeal and stimulate the intellectual mood in the observer, and then, subduing the light, they admitted into the building a dark and powerful chiaroscuro under the supreme control and handling of which the whole tremendous colour-scheme of the interior was placed. The effects attained by the St. Mark's mosaics are attained by precisely the same expedients as those of Venetian colourists, only the architecture attains the desired end more surely and completely, for it must be admitted that not even Tintoretto, in the application of the aesthetic principles common to both, could match the simplicity and singleness of aim of the Greeks.

But further, this mode of interpreting emotion is not solely a matter of art at all. We have already seen how Nature herself, when she appeals to the emotional mood in us, employs a scheme of chiaroscuro, derived from twilight, or mist, or the heavy shade of foliage, to soften down and dim the outlines of forms ; and, indeed, the interior of some dense autumnal beech-grove, which we instanced as the most emotional of colour effects in English scenery, exhibits just the same principles, the same melting depths of shadow and suffusion of rich colour, as characterise the schools of Venetian and Byzantine art. This is so even in the West, and as for the East, the very words "tropics" and "tropical" are, as it were, heavy and loaded with sensuous suggestion. As was the case with Venetian painting, many people are under the impression that this sensuousness of tropical scenery is the result of an unusual display of vivid and brilliant colour, but this, as has been explained, is far from being the case. There is often more vividness and brilliance of tint in Western scenes than in Eastern, and the superior sensuous effect of the

jungle is due to the two causes I have dealt with, to the obliteration of the sense of form and the presence of an extraordinarily powerful scheme of chiaroscuro. In their own line of the purely emotional and sensuous the effects of jungle scenery, in which perpetual and sombre shadows are darkly illumined by occasional notes of rich colour, are the most potent probably that exist in Nature ; yet the means whereby they are produced are identical with the means adopted by the Byzantine architect and the Venetian painters, and we have but to think out and formulate the causes of the fascination of tropical colouring to be in possession of the principles of Byzantine and Venetian art.

The truth is that these principles are permanent and reliable because they are reflected processes of the mind. The emotional mood, the mood of passive receptivity in which insight is an integral part of feeling, is not only different from the rational and intellectual mood, but is itself dispelled by rational and intellectual definitions in just the same way as emotional effects of colour are dispelled by the intrusion of rigidly defined forms.

Insist upon form, develop form, place form in command of the composition, and instantly the depth, richness, power, the emotional value of colour as we call it, dies out of it. But this is only a reflection, or image rendered to the eye, of a corresponding change within the mind. Insist upon intellectual culture, develop intellect, place intellect in absolute command over the mind, and as sure as fate the emotional faculty will dry up within us, the capacity for feeling will diminish, the power of insight, of an intuitive realisation of the essential nature of things will leave us, and we shall be left at last in presence of a collection of dry definitions from which all meaning of any importance has departed.

In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to distinguish between the strongly intellectual art of Florence and the strongly sensuous art of Venice. Europe, taking the ply from Florence, has for the last three hundred

years developed its life and thought on intellectual lines, and the result has been a certain atrophy and decay of its sensuous faculties. In that charming book, *Hampshire Days*, Mr. Hudson tells the story of a young cuckoo which, reared in a nest of robins, succeeded in pitching its foster-brethren one by one out of the nest until it remained in solitary and undisputed possession. It has been so with the intellectual faculty in the European mind. This, too, pampered and stimulated, has grown to such dimensions that it has ousted all rivals and taken over sole charge of the mind's enlightenment. But such a state of things as this does not make for true happiness or true understanding. When Wordsworth addressed his studious friend in the words,

Close up those barren leaves ;  
Come forth and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives,

he was thinking of the illuminating effect upon the mind of that passive intuition which is born, not of any intellectual striving, but of pure feeling, and of which, indeed, all that is best in his own poetry is the direct outcome. The enlightenment which feeling, which a sensuous apprehension of things, brings, though not so exact and definite, is more profound than that which an intellectual apprehension brings. Moreover, if the mere intellectual analysis be pursued indefinitely, there comes a time when the mind hardens, a time when, the thing itself ceasing to give pleasure, the study of the thing ceases to give pleasure also. This state of weariness is apt to overtake and has overtaken, as we know from their own statements, many scientific thinkers—many men, that is to say, who, cultivating their intellectual faculties to excess, allow their sensuous faculties to atrophy from disuse. But it attacks not only individuals, it attacks epochs as well. The mind of society as a whole is subject to these fits of one-sided development, and after one of these fits it feels the effects of the reaction. The intensity with which,



for a long time past, the mind of Europe has been set on intellectual culture is to-day working out its inevitable consequences.

Let the reader look around in any direction he likes, and he will see those consequences plainly enough. We have been talking of pictures. What are the gifts manifested in modern painting? Do we find, in modern exhibitions, pictures painted out of an unquestioning emotion of joy, and communicating that emotion to others; or do we find works in which the chief merits are often a wonderfully skilful technique, keen faculties of observation and analysis, an interesting or ingenious interpretation of scenes or events, and feats of execution so weirdly clever that they have almost the air of conjuring tricks? Are not both the merits and defects of such works, their cleverness and coldness, intellectual merits and defects? Again, take art criticism. Is the general tendency and effect of it to make us feel that pictures are pre-eminently a source of joy, or to make us feel that pictures are things to be understood, and that the questions of most interest concerning them are who painted them, what mixture of "influences" is apparent in them, and whence and by what route each motive found its way to the place it occupies? In fine, is not the estimate proposed by modern criticism entirely an intellectual one? Or let us for an instant turn to literature. That branch of literature which is most dependent on the gift of sensuous apprehension is fiction. What is the note of modern fiction? Do we find in it the spontaneous and warm vitality which arises from an intuitive realisation of character, or do we find characters carefully analysed, treated not as personalities, but as assemblages of qualities, moving through the pre-ordained maze of a plot evidently carefully thought out and deliberately constructed beforehand?

It must, I think, strike any one who attentively considers the plight of modern art and modern literature that what both are suffering from is the effect of the decay of the

emotional faculties. Moreover, art and literature being expressions of life, we must expect to find evidence of the same decay in the life around us. And everywhere such evidence is to be met with. It is to be met with, for instance, in the quality of the religious thought of the age; for certainly what most strongly characterises this is the hankering it exhibits to deal with religion in some way or other by means of the intellectual faculty, to make religion intelligible, to "translate it," to use the common phrase, into "terms of modern thought." We have become so thoroughly intellectualised that the idea of having something among us not amenable to intellectual standards is intolerable.<sup>1</sup> Is it not indeed the root of our spiritual *malaise* that we can only bring ourselves to accept a religion that intellect is able to grasp, while the religion intellect is able to grasp always turns out not to be a religion at all?

But, finally, and not to dwell unduly on these hints, let me ask the reader to consider at large the aspect of the lives of men and women of all classes. Does it not strike him that, while intellectual activity and ingenuity have on all sides wonderfully improved the conditions of life, yet somehow happiness and the capacity for feeling have by no means kept pace with that improvement? Consider the labourers whom one meets in the country trudging from their work, or the artisans that crowd the third-class compartments of evening suburban trains. Are they happier than formerly? They have better wages, is the answer, and, wages being causes of happiness, they must be happier. But wages are not the causes of happiness; or they can only act as such, at least, through the sensibility of our powers of feeling. If our powers of feeling be decayed and atrophied, wages may be as high as you will, but we shall get no real happiness out of them.

<sup>1</sup> I leave these final paragraphs as they were written perhaps a dozen years ago, but already I think a development more emotional and spiritual in modern thought is declaring itself.

It is the same in all classes of life. The intense restlessness of wealthy people, their darting and rushing about, the "high pressure," as it is called, at which life nowadays is lived—what is it but a hunting and seeking after a happiness which somehow is not attained? We shall be happy to-morrow, or a mile farther on; but we are not happy now and here. We live in constant expectation of happiness, we adopt every kind of expedient for achieving it, but of how many people could we say that they live in the assured and tranquil possession of it? Happiness is an emotion, and if the emotional faculties, if the capacity for feeling, be dried up within ourselves, reasons for being happy may be proposed without end and yet bring us no nearer the desired result.

In art and literature, then, in criticism, in religion, in all the ordinary aspects of life, both of poor and rich, there may easily be traced signs of the one-sided development we spoke of. Everywhere we see traces of intellectual activity, ingenuity and vitality, but nowhere do we find any corresponding traces of emotional development; on the contrary, we detect on every side evidences of emotional decadence. Modern life thinks, reasons, analyses with great assiduity and wonderful results, but it does not feel deeply, and consequently it is unable to distil from its intellectual achievements and improved circumstances the stores of happiness with which they seem to be laden. Fortunately, however, these lopsided developments sooner or later right themselves. Mankind finds out its mistake and casts back instinctively for the line it has overrun. We are in such a crisis at the present moment. We still have our hard-and-fast intellectualists, but they have a much smaller body of conviction behind them than, till recently, was the case, and the breed consequently has very much fallen off and diminished sadly in growth and stature. On the other hand, mysticism, spiritual consciousness, the philosophy of feeling are subjects that draw to themselves day by day an increasing share of attention. The aged East,

the home of all such secrets, once more begins to attract our regard, and all voices that can in any way interpret her point of view to us are sure to be listened to. In this way it is that the times we live in are favouring the art of Venice. It is no doubt true that neither Venetian art nor Venetian life is a very adequate witness of what is most valuable in Oriental thought. Still, it is also true that Venetian art and Venetian life are essentially an art and a life of feeling. In this they are genuinely Oriental and pass on in an intelligible medium the message of the East to the West. In Venetian painting we have a testimony to the supreme value of a sensuous apprehension of things. It is by the cultivation of the sensuous faculties, so that painting seems to assure us, that happiness and joy are realised. But, more than that, it is by the cultivation of the sensuous faculties, so Venetian art at its greatest declares, that true knowledge and insight are to be attained. The philosophy of feeling receives at the hands of the Venetian colourists an interpretation always attractive and sometimes profound ; and if in the Renaissance of the intellectual faculties Florence took the lead, perhaps in the Renaissance of the sensuous faculties, of which we would seem to be on the eve, Venice will take the lead. To Florence—Florence the intellectual, Florence of the clean-cut definitions and exact forms—we turned that we might learn to think. To Venice—Venice the sensuous, Venice of the heavy shadows and rich colours and profound emotions—we must turn that we may learn to feel.

## CHAPTER XIV

### INTELLECTUAL LIMITATIONS

The conflict of intellectual and emotional tendencies as seen in real life, and in the people among whom we live, and the mental atrophy which a rigorous and exclusive cultivation of the intellect tends to produce.

IN dealing with a subject of this kind one is often apt to become abstract and dull, and therefore it is an excellent thing as we go along to keep in view the human significance of the ideas with which we are dealing. I endeavoured in a former chapter to illustrate, by an appeal to Eastern and Western life as they are still seen, the contrast in thought between the two which had been occupying our attention. In the same way I would show in the present chapter something of the same conflict as exemplified in customs and characters of our own friends and neighbours, and in order to do this intelligibly it will be best to have recourse to the friends and neighbours we all have in common in the masterpieces of fiction. We shall find what we want among the great novelists of the Victorian age.

The age itself is worth a moment's attention. Scientific epochs are rare because they occur only at moments when science can pass itself off for something more than it is. As soon as the limitations inherent in the scientific standpoint are appreciated its reign is over. But it takes some finding out. Its promises are the more convincing because they are based on definite achievements. It argues from what it has done to what it may do. Its



material revelations are ungainsayable, and these are but the beginnings, "but the earnest," as the voice of the age, Tennyson, said, "of the things that it will do." What will these things that it will do amount to? Will they not extend from the finite to the infinite and include all spiritual as well as temporal knowledge? Science was always diffident on these points and its humility was one of its greatest assets. It refused to make promises. It could not itself estimate the probable extent of its own knowledge. We must have patience. This it would say—we were only at the beginning.

In this way people were taken captive. What they wanted, poor things, was what mankind has wanted in all ages, spiritual knowledge, spiritual hope, spiritual assurance; and they argued that, because science could already define a star, some day she would define God! Not only did she know such a lot, but evidently it was in her to know such a lot more! These expectations science herself received with no arrogance, but with her usual killing meekness. Did it lie with her to demonstrate their futility? To her they were scarcely futile, "for," she would have argued, "if I can never know what these people want me to, yet I shall probably know all there is to know." In short, it was the attraction of the unexplored, the thought of possible developments, which in the latter half of the nineteenth century gave science its vogue and enabled it to extend its influence over spheres of thought not its own and natures which never should have been subject to it.

It acted powerfully on character. Every one breathed its air to some extent; and those brought up under its immediate influence felt the effects of it through life. Intellectual natures became confirmed and hardened in the intellectual groove, and emotional natures were often swayed by its masterful influence to the neglect of the best and richest side of their own character. It is to one of these last that I would direct attention.

Every one remembers and has been touched by the

last words of *The Mill on the Floss*: "Brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted; living over together in that supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love and roamed the daisied fields together."

Poor Maggie! Few heroines have been so loved. It might seem strange that one so misunderstood in her lifetime should appeal so directly to the hearts of all readers of her story, did we not know that it is the function of art to interpret life by drawing out those essential characteristics which in life are so often obscured by what is accidental and superficial. Many of us understand Maggie in George Eliot's pages who would never have understood her in real life. The deep discrepancy of character between brother and sister, the emotional impulses of the girl dashing themselves against the curt practical purposes of the man—these are the elements of a situation we all realise. The opposition between the emotional and rational standpoints is at the root of half the tragedies of life, and, in some shape or other, among the commonest experiences of all of us.

But Maggie is interesting in another way. There is no need to remind the reader that *The Mill on the Floss* is largely autobiographical, and that some of the actual scenes between Maggie and Tom were founded upon incidents in the childhood of George Eliot and her brother Isaac. Maggie, with her simple, rich emotionalism, is George Eliot herself as a girl. This emotional self existed in George Eliot, and her inward history is the history of its slow destruction under the attacks of rationalism. It was philosophy and science, it was Herbert Spencer and Huxley and August Comte who killed Maggie. The story is a familiar one, but all the better suited to our purpose on that account. Susceptible as she was to current ideas, the intellectualism in the air laid hold of George Eliot as soon as she began to think. The translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, of Spinoza's *Tractato Theologico-Politicus*, of Feuerbach's *Essence of Chris-*

tion, and reviews of such inspiring productions as Mackay's *Progress of the Intellect* are the studies in which we find her engaged from her five-and-twentieth to her five-and-thirtieth years, and the influence of which, gradual but inexorable, was confirmed by her intimacy with all that was most rigidly intellectual in the strenuous scientific society of her day. The effect on her genius was not felt at first. Down to 1861, when she was forty-two years old, the emotional faculty holds its own and is the dominant faculty in her work. The *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner* belong to this period. In 1861 she began the historical novel, *Romola*, for which she went through a course of reading, Leslie Stephen tell us, "which would have qualified her to write a history." This was the work which, her husband says, "ploughed into her more than any of her other books." But her own testimony is still more significant. She felt that the book "marked a transition in her history." She "began it," she says, "a young woman—she finished it an old woman."

*Romola* signalises in George Eliot's life the moment when intellectualism asserted its control over her spontaneous and emotional gifts, a control which was never relaxed. She never henceforward recovered the warm, natural flexibility of her first books. A spell of illness and enforced rest intervenes between *Romola* and *Felix Holt*, and in *Felix Holt* she returns to her early life and provincial experiences. But *Felix Holt* is a failure. The power to deal as she had dealt with simple situations and emotions, the power which had created the Poysers and Dodsons and Tullivers, had left her. Henceforth her genius subserves philosophical and ethical purposes. Her style, if it gains in analytical subtlety, loses the old feeling and charm, while the desire to express everything in terms of the intellect gives to her language the pedantic ring which henceforth is to characterise it.

Probably most readers will agree with Leslie Stephen when he says that George Eliot's later books, "in which

the didactic impulse is strongest, suffer in comparison with the earlier, where it is latent"; but setting aside purely literary judgments, what we have to notice here is the effect of a certain training upon a certain faculty. George Eliot was endowed by nature with the faculty which is in its essence emotional and creative. The natural sustenance and daily food of that faculty are the sights and sounds and interests and affections and troubles and joys of daily life—all, in a word, which feeds feeling. She, on the contrary, proceeded to regale it on German philosophy and metaphysics, on the *Progress of the Intellect* and the *Tractato Theologico-Politicus*—on all, in a word, which feeds intellect. Between a gift naturally strong, but starved, and a rival faculty, also by nature strong and further strengthened by years of exercise and training, the decisive struggle occurred, as has been pointed out, half way through the author's literary career. Intellectualism chose its own ground, equipped itself carefully for the fight, and routed its adversary in a pitched battle once for all.

It was the growth of the modern habit, the habit of passing all ideas through the intellect, which was drying up in George Eliot the source of emotional intuition. The same process and the same results are visible among many of her contemporaries. It is almost horrible to watch how, as the habit of reasoning absorbed him, the capacity for all spontaneous feeling became atrophied in Herbert Spencer. In the same way Darwin points out himself by what degrees the emotional faculty was done to death in him by the exclusive cultivation of the intellectual faculty. His curiously impartial evidence is well worth quoting. "Up to the age," he says, "of thirty or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very



great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures and music." Neither, he goes on to say, does fine scenery yield him "the exquisite delight which it formerly did"; and in general he has to lament the shipwreck of one whole side of his nature. He is conscious of his loss. "My mind," he says, "seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts"; and the result has been "the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend." At the same time he feels that the preservation of the lost faculty was originally within his power, that its extinction is due to neglect and the over-cultivation of intellect. "If I had to live my life again," he concludes, "I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would then have been kept active through use."

We have seen George Eliot, a richly emotional nature, drying up her genius by exclusively intellectual culture. We now see Darwin too late regretting that exclusively intellectual culture should have "atrophied," to use his own word, the emotional side of his nature altogether. But after all there was nothing unique about George Eliot and Herbert Spencer and Darwin. They were specimens of their kind. The influences which affected them affected their contemporaries and have affected, no doubt, mankind in all ages. There never was a time since man learnt to reason that there has not been this play and give and take between reasoning and feeling. The rational instinct or the emotional has governed whole epochs, and in the present book we have attempted to trace their influence as it has from time to time determined the character of art. These phenomena are on a huge scale. We have brought together for comparison



the art of Byzantium derived from Eastern sources, and Doric architecture wrought in the clear morning of Greek intellectualism. In the art which incarnates the mediaeval life of Europe, half mystical dream as it was and half practical struggle for existence, the two combined and mingled, the practical element embodying itself in structural forms of surpassing energy, while the emotional element poured itself forth in those deep beams of colour which flood our Gothic interiors, the character of which is unmistakable to all who have learnt to recognise what in colour is emotional. As the Renaissance crept in, as intellect resumed its ancient sway over Western life, that colour we saw die away. No skill could detain it, no science restore it. As what it fed on died out of life, so it, too, died out of art. Only in one corner of Europe, where the Oriental influence had taken root and become indigenous, it lingered on, and Venice preserves for some centuries the deep-shadowed, intense hues, which, through Gothic and Byzantine interiors, we trace back to their source in the East.

My object in the present chapter is but to remind the reader that this mighty conflict of ideals, this ebb and flow which has governed the universe and the ages, is carried on likewise and finds its little echo in our own hearts and the hearts of our neighbours. It is not only a question of the exact proportion of the Parthenon and the golden darkness of Chartres ; our village tragedies are made of the same stuff. Art, as I am so fond of saying, is but the expression of life. Look around you and in life you will find all the elements with which we have been dealing. The Tom Tullivers of the world are the champions of the practical and the mundane. They contain the raw material of intellectualism, and their aspirations never exceed the definitions of form. The Maggies, alas ! too few among us, are the deep poetic and emotional influences, which, indeterminate and often ineffectual as they are, seem, as we well say, to *colour* the lives of all who come in contact with them.

And yet, at the same time this opposition, or sense of antagonism, which, through all that has been written, has appeared both between these faculties themselves and all their outward manifestations, constitutes only a part, as it were, of a familiar dualism which pervades the universe. For instance, we have called this book *Form and Colour*; well, let us take the two words and place them each at the head of a column, and under them let us append the family proper to either. We have spoken of East and West; will any one, not following our arguments, but merely obeying their natural instinct, hesitate as to which column those two words are to go in? Of course he will not; of course he will write West under Form and East under Colour. Take another pair of opposites, solid and fluid. The reader can enter them in their respective columns without help from me. Take another pair, masculine and feminine; and another pair, intellectual and emotional; and another, active and passive; and yet another, positive and negative; and another, hard and soft; and so on through a succession of pairs of words, each the antithesis of the other, and in apparent antagonism to it, yet each, too, in a manner drawn to its opposite because supplying what it lacks and what is necessary to complete it. The family likeness in the two sets of words can easily be distinguished.

Form.	Colour.
West.	East
Solid.	Fluid.
Masculine.	Feminine.
Intellectual.	Emotional.
Active.	Passive.
Positive.	Negative.
Hard.	Soft.

Group them and the result is that all those words which belong to one side of the mind's activity, the intellectual side—all the words which signify precision, definition, and effective dealings with the concrete universe—range themselves on one side, while all those which belong to the other side of the mind's intelligence,

and which stand for all that is profound but eternally elusive in emotional intuition, draw apart and range themselves on the other side.

It is out of these two states of mind that all the works of mankind which count for anything have proceeded ; and this it is which makes the subject we are dealing with so alive and full of human interest. This dualism, this inveterate hostility, yet still profounder sympathy, inspires, yet rankles, in the life of the present as of the past. It is true of East and West and all they stand for, it is true of the whole dual chain of ideas we have spoken of, that though opposed to each other and contrary to each other, they each and all are necessary to each other ; so much so that of each pair neither member could exist, or receive definition, without the aid of its opposite. Would East be East if there were no West, or fluid fluid if there were no solid ? Does not emotion without intellect dissipate its own resources and exhaust itself of its own light, and intellect without emotion dry up and ossify ? Is it not in other words evident that the sympathy between these apparent opposites is deeper than their antagonism ?

The Greeks had a pleasant fable that human beings were once spherical and complete, until the jealous gods divided each body vertically into two halves, male and female, since when each half has wandered up and down the world seeking the other and unable to be happy without it. Such is the world's dualism, such the task of reconciliation that is set before us. It is under these circumstances that art can give us help. It is a perpetual admonishment ; for, incarnating as it does the great perceptive faculties of the mind, if either of them should fall into abeyance in life, yet in art it still survives, is still among us, is still eloquent. Scattered through Nature is an unlimited wealth of emotional and intellectual phenomena on which emotion and intellect equally subsist. But these, as I say, are scattered, and seem to demand the operation of some consciously coherent

impulse ere the mind can definitely apprehend them. Art is the image of living thought. All that intellect sought for in Nature, sought for and missed, in exact definition and articulate construction, is summed up in the great types of intellectual art. All that the emotional faculty half guessed at in shadowy wood or ocean depth is embodied in the great examples of emotional art. The greatest art is that which exhibits the greatest motives with the least alloy. The interior splendour of Chartres and of St. Mark's, the symmetrical proportions of the Parthenon are images of the mind's noblest powers, unalloyed and perfect. These it is, and such as these, riding superbly through the ages, which fulfil the high function of art by keeping alive in the hearts of each transitory and distracted generation the ideal of man's full capacity. To this present generation and to the modern age the admonition comes home most keenly, for universality is the note of modern criticism and modern research, and to the present the art of the past is revealed with more distinctness than ever before.

Therefore to us more than any the ideal of man's full capacity seems to address itself. With such evidence before us we cannot let either side of the mind's activity fall into abeyance again. The old dualism confronts us more directly, more menacingly even, than ever before. Never again can we deny the intellect and wrap ourselves in spiritual contemplation. Never again can we exclude the inner vision and encage ourselves within the capacity of the intellect. In the life and thought of the future both these must be included, and their union harmonised. How such a task may be fulfilled, and under what auspices of thought it will be carried out are questions which, difficult as they are to handle, yet form the very essence of the present and future purposes of art. To one or two of their more obvious aspects I will therefore devote a few final pages.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

An account of certain aspects of European life and thought which seem to show that the idea of an equal and harmonious fusion of the spiritual and intellectual faculties in man is now strongly in the air.

DURING the last twelve or fourteen years the author had written a good number of essays and articles dealing with the thought and art of East and West, and based on the conception that thought in the East is emotional and speaks in colour, while thought in the West is intellectual and speaks in form. The difficulty was how to apply this to certain phases of Christian-European art. If it were true that colour belonged to the East and form to the West how explain the deep and powerful colour notes in Western art? Further, how was the Renaissance itself to be explained, its obvious discontent with its own intellectual standard, its restless, questioning attitude of mind, as testified to in Renaissance art, and chiefly in that of its greatest and most typical representative, Michelangelo? The habit of regarding art as an expression of life having become ingrained in the writer, he was instinctively aware that the fusion of intellectual and emotional, which exist in some phases of Western art, must have existed already in the life of those periods. It was evident that Eastern colour had come into Western art, had from time to time deeply and richly illumined it. But if it had done so, then, seeing that art only speaks for existing, living ideas, it could only have come



in company with the order of ideas to which it belonged. The spiritual and emotional ideas which speak in colour must at that moment have been as fully present in Western life as colour itself was present in Western art.

But how did they get there, and how were they maintained? For years the present work was suspended. Though it was under his nose, the writer could not discover the human explanation of the elements present in European art. He knew what he wanted, he wanted some force in living ideas which embodied and justified both the emotional and intellectual standpoints. He wanted to find this fusion enforced with the same emphasis, and as unmistakably made a doctrine of life, as in the East he had found the emotional idea only and in the West the intellectual idea only turned into such a motive. It was plain from the testimony of art that the sought-for doctrine must exist in life, but under what guise? The study of Hellenistic art, curiously enough, and the circumstances under which it arose helped towards a solution of the difficulty. The fusion of Eastern with Western ideas, which had so evidently inspired this revolution, and which had produced an art so curiously allied to many phases of modern art, was just such a predisposing cause as we were in search of. Here were the two orders of ideas, spiritual and intellectual, both in charge of life, both active in life, and both exhibiting their joint action in the art of the period, just as later and much more forcibly they exhibited it in European art. So far so good, but immediately the question arose how and under what powerful auspices had this fusion of ideas been preserved and handed down, as certainly it had been handed down, to future generations? With this we were knocking at the door. No other agent but religion could have so guaranteed this novel philosophy as that it should fully possess life. The agent must have been religion. The fusion of ideas sought for must have existed in Christianity itself.

And what more palpable than that they did so?

What more palpable than that they did in fact form the very tissue of the faith? Was not half of Christianity, the half which emphasised man's going to God, designed especially to appeal to the East? Was not the other half, the half which declared God's coming to man, designed especially for the West? The first justified the purely spiritual and emotional impulse which, with the great ascetics, would repudiate matter as a mere encumbrance; the second justified the keen intellectual concern with mundane interests which was the hall mark of the Greek intelligence. Christianity, in short, contained in itself, or was in itself, that fusion of spiritual and intellectual which we sought. The mediaeval period, the "age of faith," was admittedly a period strictly under the control of the ideas contained in Christianity. Certainly Christianity occupied during that time as complete an authority in life as intellectual philosophy had occupied in classic times, or which spiritual mysticism occupied in Hindu thought. Here, then, was the necessary interaction. The richly shadowed, intense tints of a Gothic interior, so eloquent of spiritual absorption, and its energetic structural features and varied and vigorous sculpture, so redolent of men's human sympathies and work in the world, were united in art because already the corresponding trains of thought had been mingled and combined in the religion of that age.

But the influence of Christianity is not specifically mediaeval. It has been from the first a vital factor, slowly but surely transforming the human intelligence and altering the character of its thought, and although its manifold effects cannot here be traced, yet their main direction and tendency, in so far as they affect the subject we have in hand, may perhaps be indicated.

In the year 1909 there appeared a *Life of Richard Jefferies*, the naturalist and mystic, written with much insight and charm by Mr. Edward Thomas, and in July of that year I wrote an article on Jefferies in the *Edinburgh Review*, in the course of which I attempted to define the

difference between Western mysticism, which accepts Nature and matter as aids to spiritual vision, and Eastern mysticism, which rejects and sweeps aside all Nature and all matter as a preliminary to the act of contemplation. It was the dwelling on this note of difference which seemed to reveal the character of the influence of Christianity. "The basis and inspiration," I point out in the above-mentioned article, "of Western as of Eastern contemplation was the joy obtainable through the exercise of the soul's function of seeing and knowing. But in the West, far from involving the obliteration of all human and material interests, contemplation seemed rather, while it subdued and purified, to sweeten and lend them an increased significance."

If I venture to quote a few further paragraphs it is because the understanding of this dual tendency of Christianity, or tendency to include both material and spiritual in its survey, seems to me to be absolutely essential to the due appreciation of European-Christian art, not only of the past, but of the present and future. I go on, then, to show that, in all its human and material relations, the contemplative piety of the Middle Ages is swayed by profoundly natural sympathies and susceptibilities. "It is certain that there have been no friendships more tender than have subsisted between monks, that no charity was ever more constant and reliable than monastic charity. It is certain, again, that education, study, the love of thought and of letters were for ten rough centuries, while Europe was given up to violence and the material of future nations was shaking into place, housed and domiciled in monasteries. It is certain that the love and culture of art were fostered in the same retreats; and it is certain finally, from the sites chosen for monasteries and the use made of those sites, as well as from intimate personal records which have come down to us, that a fondness and attachment for Nature existed among monks which did not at that time commonly exist in the world. We are not speak-

ing here," I added, "of the system of monasticism in the centuries immediately preceding the rise of the intellectualism of the Renaissance. Monasticism sickened for long before it died. Its decline marks and keeps pace with the decline of mysticism in Europe. The idea of the soul as the 'knower,' the 'knowing agent,' was dying in the West, to make room, provisionally at any rate, for the intellect as the knowing agent. But prior to its decline the mystical sense was a great power in Europe, and was compatible and went hand in hand with the love of humanity, the love of learning, the love of art, and the love of Nature, therein differing entirely from mysticism as apprehended by the East.

"To assign a cause for this striking difference," I then go on, "we must allow weight to the changed form of belief which had arisen in the West and the change it wrought in the intellectual point of view. The acceptance of the fact of the Incarnation was necessarily fatal to one of the two main tenets of mysticism. It was fatal to the idea of the nonentity of the visible universe. Not that it supplied the Christian with intellectual arguments. This finite existence, this life of time and space, might be a dream. He could not tell. He knew of no reason why we should turn our own sense-impressions into qualities of things separate from us. . . . But the knot he could not untie he could cut. Into his world of shadows had come a sudden reality. God had visited him, had broken into his little sphere of time and place, had put on the attributes of mortality and clothed himself in the outward semblance of the finite. To one who had humbled his understanding to the reception of that gaunt fact the universe necessarily appeared under a new aspect. It mattered very little to him how unreal or transitory appearances might be. They had for the time being received the divine sanction. Materialism might be a hoax, but it was a divine hoax. It belonged to a divine scheme. Moreover, no sooner did the Christian accept materialism in this light than it became itself transfigured.



Natural truth and natural beauty became, in some inscrutable way, a support and an interpretation for spiritual truth and spiritual beauty. The finite ceased to be merely the finite, and was penetrated and suffused with the infinite. All the common affections and instincts of poor human lives, all the common sights and sounds we fondly think we see or hear in a Nature which has no real existence, were endowed with a sudden wonderful significance. These shadows, these idle hallucinations, this veil of matter, which, as Hindu thought has it, is hung between us and reality, and blots out the sight of it from us—all this actually becomes a means of instilling into the human mind a deeper idea and richer conception of spiritual existence.

“ This is the difference between contemplation (between the use made of the mystical faculty, that is to say) in the East and West. There is but the one faculty, and in both East and West the act of spiritual vision was the same ; but whereas the East rejected temporal existence altogether the West, on the word of God, accepted it, and forthwith found that in manifold ways it could be treated and turned to account by the spiritual faculty itself.

“ We have spoken of the love of Humanity, of Knowledge, of Art, and of Nature as being found consistent in Europe with the free exercise of the spiritual faculty. Let us follow one of these emotions, the love of Nature, a little farther. In the *Contemporary Review* for last February [February 1909] there was an interesting article on the love of wild Nature by Mr. Havelock Ellis, in which he traces the history of the deepening and strengthening of this love. There had been little like it in the classic epoch, but it almost immediately follows on the rise of Christianity. He quotes St. Jerome’s epistle on the beauty of the desert ; Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, on the glory and harmony of the universe ; and St. Augustine on the colours of the sea and its majesty in storm ; and then he comes down to later ages and traces through many centuries the ‘ close connexion between the most solemn or the most



ascetic moments of Christian life, and scenery that was constantly beautiful and sometimes in the highest degree romantically wild.' But yet, even while insisting on all this, even while pointing out that the Christian appreciation of the beauty of Nature was ahead of the standard of the age, Mr. Havelock Ellis does not find the cause of the change in any idea contained in Christianity. He thinks that a number of very emotional people were drawn to Christianity in the first centuries, and, being forced to take refuge in wild places, developed an appreciation of that kind of scenery. This explanation, however, does not appear to be adequate.

"We are not dealing with a temporary and spasmodic movement, but with a change, permanent and continuous, of the human mind in relation to Nature. The cause alleged by Mr. Havelock Ellis, that, in the early days of Christianity, some emotional individuals were driven to make close acquaintance with Nature, is a transitory cause. The time soon came when Christianity was received as the normal religion of Europe, and when its profession involved no change whatever in the ordinary habits of life; yet the new thought of something spiritual and divine in Nature did not therefore die out, but on the contrary steadily spread and grew. It is difficult to see how two phenomena, the one so accidental and temporary as the flight of certain Christians to the wild, and the other so abiding as the new love of wild Nature, should be related as cause and effect.

"It seems as if Mr. Havelock Ellis were confronted with the right explanation but passes it by. The love of wild Nature 'received,' he thinks, 'a powerful impetus from influences associated with the development of primitive Christianity.' At the same time this love of Nature was a by-product of Christianity only, 'for there is nothing in the doctrine of Christianity which implies approval or disapproval of any aspect of Nature.' This may be true of the doctrine of Christianity: it may even be true of the doctrine that it 'may be said to encourage indifference

towards Nature altogether, abstracting man's attention from the external world and concentrating it on the problems of the soul.' But besides the doctrine there are the facts of Christianity, the fact of Christ's appearance in the flesh, the fact that He consented in His own person to Nature, that He recognised earthly ordinances, that He was touched by the beauty of wild flowers and concerned with the fate of sparrows. How was this likely to tell? We must throw ourselves back," I then point out, "into the currents of thought of the early Christian controversies. The question at issue," I meant the question which was most persistently at issue, which dominates all early controversies, and on the solution of which the future of Christianity might be said to depend, "was the nature of the Second Person of the Trinity. Oriental thought was set on explaining away and dissolving Christ's dual nature; Western thought was set on establishing it. Put in another way, however, the controversy amounted to this: Was Christianity to be absorbed into the abstract Eastern philosophy, or was it to be accepted as sanctioning and recognising our human life and its surroundings?"

Such was the issue. It is difficult to throw ourselves back, as I said, into currents of thought of nineteen centuries ago. We cannot realise or conceive, with the Renaissance behind us and established in intellectualism as we are, we cannot conceive what it must feel like to have the whole rational foundations of life assailed and threatened by the fluid, lapping motion of mystical thought. That was what was going on in the early Christian centuries. Moreover, that was what held out a threat to the future. Everything of which we have been speaking, as characteristic of Western thought, intellectual culture, all the knowledge and science, the progress and civilisation we are so proud of were in the balance. Had the struggle gone the other way, had the East prevailed, had the idea of fusion between spiritual and material been lost, these things too would have been lost, or rather would never have been developed. We

should have swung back to the Eastern standpoint. We should have yielded to the invasion of those wordless emotional ideas which steal upon the senses like sleep ; we should have shared the East's dream, and all that now separates us from the East and which we look upon as most typically Western would never have seen its birth.

What made the struggle the harder was that the West was fighting for a compromise. The last thing it desired was to reject the spiritual faculty and return to Nature and reason. Yet neither would it discard Nature and reason. " The champions of the Western view recognised to the utmost the value of the mystical gift, the inward spiritual vision. They knew, just as well as the Hindu ascetics, what it was to be suffused with spiritual consciousness. But they held out nevertheless for the hard fact of the Incarnation, and by so doing, by forcing and obliging the spiritual faculty to concern itself with Nature and this finite existence and the visible universe, they went surety, so to speak, for Nature's response to the spiritual faculty. Did they know all that was involved and all they hazarded ? Perhaps not, though already they themselves were beginning to see Nature transfigured. In any case their trust was justified. Nature made the necessary response and an alliance, hitherto unthinkable, was struck up between the spiritual faculty in man and the universe in which he has his abode. It is a manifestation of this alliance which we follow when we trace, with Mr. Havelock Ellis, the deepening of man's love of Nature and the increasing sense of an inward beauty and harmony pervading all her aspects and operations."

Modern life, I go on to point out, still insists on this alliance. It will not give up its hold on spiritual ideas in order to take up entirely with the interests and opportunities of the visible universe, nor will it give up the visible universe in favour of purely abstract spiritual ideas. " Neither the classical ideal nor the Oriental ideal satisfies it. It insists on the fusion of the two." This is the characteristic, main idea which governs Western life,

and this idea of a fusion between spiritual and material goes back to, and proceeds out of the original fusion of the two in the inauguration of Western religion, that is to say, it goes back to and proceeds out of the Incarnation.

The views of every race on Nature are reflected in its poetry, and perhaps the difference between pagan poetry and that which came after it may be defined by saying that pagan poetry recognises Nature's appeal to human emotions and to human feelings of tenderness and love, while the later poets, who wrote since Christianity had acted upon the world, went further, and treated Nature as a source of inward knowledge and spiritual illumination. Nature, in the great Christian poets (I am not sure that this is not the test of their greatness, the test of their capacity to utter the central thought of their race), is an independent witness, herself spiritually inspired. "The poetry more specially of Christendom is informed with a feeling for Nature emotional and spiritual to a degree hitherto undreamt of. Nature is no longer a mere accessory of man, deriving her interest and significance chiefly from him, nor a mere delusion of the senses shutting him off from the truth. She is a witness and a testament. She is soaked in the Divine will and the Divine intention. As eyes full of spiritual question gazed at her the outer husk of appearances yielded, and everywhere the inner spiritual meaning peeped through, as shining chestnuts show through the cracking pods."

It is unnecessary to quote examples of a tendency which must be familiar to every one. It may, however, be pointed out that the recognition of this divine intention in Nature is almost always the work of our greatest poets, and of our greatest poets at their greatest. Shakespeare is at his greatest in such passages as—

Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold ;  
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins.

Wordsworth is at his greatest in such passages as—

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

What is peculiar in these passages is the fusion in them of spiritualism and realism. They are too spiritual to be the outcome of classic thought, and too real to be the outcome of Eastern thought. They combine ideas never combined before Christianity ; in a word they are made possible by the Incarnation.

Jefferies is most significant as one who possessed in an extraordinary degree this sense of the spiritual in Nature. He handles and touches the least natural objects in such a way that his estimate of their spiritual worth is somehow communicated to the reader. We know from his own accounts how daily, as he walked about, watching and taking notes, he would go apart into some lonely place and yield himself to a state of trance. He was in these trances "rapt" and "carried away." His whole nature was given up to the act of spiritual aspiration.

"I see now," he writes later, "that what I laboured for was soul-life, more soul-nature, to be exalted, to be full of soul-learning." It is the old thought, the mystic thought, of the soul as knower. But it is not with Jefferies an abstract thought ; on the contrary, the whole universe and all Nature are ministers of his soul-life.

"With the earth, the sun and sky, the stars hidden by the light, with the ocean . . . with these I prayed, as if they were the keys of an instrument . . . leaning against the oak's massive trunk, and feeling the rough bark and the lichen at my back, looking southwards over the grassy



fields, cowslip-yellow, at the woods on the slope, I thought my desire of deeper soul-life . . . under the shapely rounded elms, by the hawthorn bushes and hazel, everywhere the same deep desire for the soul-nature. . . . But to touch the lichened bark of a tree, or the end of a spray projecting over the path as I walked, seemed to repeat the same prayer in me. The long-lived summer days dried and warmed the turf in the meadows. I used to lie down in solitary corners at full length on my back, so as to feel the embrace of the earth. The grass stood high above me, and the shadows of the tree-branches danced on my face. I looked up at the sky, with half-closed eyes to bear the dazzling light. Bees buzzed over, sometimes a butterfly passed, there was a hum in the air, greenfinches sang in the hedge. . . . Dreaming in appearance I was breathing full of existence ; I was aware of the grass-blades, the flowers, the leaves on hawthorn and tree. I seemed to live more largely through them, as if each were a pore through which I drank. The grasshoppers called and leaped, the greenfinches sang, the blackbirds happily fluted, all the air hummed with life. I was plunged deep in existence, and with all that existence I prayed. . . . Through every grass-blade in the thousand, thousand grasses ; through the million leaves, veined and edge-cut, on bush and tree ; through the song-notes and the marked feathers of the birds ; through the insects' hum and the colour of the butterflies ; through the soft warm air, the flecks of cloud dissolving—I used them all for prayer.”

Can anything be conceived more opposite to Eastern mysticism than this ? The reader remembers the contemplative ascetics in Eastern forests, sternly excluding all outer consciousness that they may advance in soul-life, in soul-learning : shutting their eyes to the visible world that they may see into their own souls. Here is Jefferies, a Western mystic, actually utilising all such outward things as a means of approach to the same spiritual science. “ These passages as much as the poetic

passages before quoted, reveal a view of Nature not possible before the Incarnation but made possible by it. Neither in the Oriental phase of pure emotionalism, nor in the classical phase of pure intellectualism could they have been evolved. It was the welding of these two together, the forcing of mankind to look at material Nature through spiritual eyes, which gave birth to them."

Thus far I had proceeded on my own account. Throughout all Christian art and literature there ran a feeling, a consciousness of the union and interfusion of spiritual and material, which, when traced back, rested ultimately on the same interfusion in the foundations of the Christian faith. But how was such a view as this likely to conform to existing criticism? The question appeared to be answered by a recently published work <sup>1</sup> of Baron von Hügel, which has been commended by discerning critics equally for the breadth of its learning and the penetration of its thought. The leading idea which emerges from its analysis is precisely that dualism in the Christian religion with which the history of art has brought us in contact. "Thus less than ever," the author writes on page 316, "is the Immanentism and the Incarnation Doctrine of Christianity an empty theory; indeed its insistence that spirit shall penetrate and transform matter, and shall thus awaken and develop its own self, has never in the history of the world had so gigantic a field, and such immense difficulties, in which to show and to develop its power, as it possesses now." And on page 389: "As in all mental apprehension and conviction there is always, somewhere, the element of stimulation of the senses, so also does the spirit awaken to its own life and powers on occasion of contact and conflict with material things. Hence eternal life will (here below at least) not mean for man aloofness from matter and the bodily senses, nor even a restriction of their use to means of spiritual self-expression; but it will include also a rich and wise contact with, and an awakening by means of,

<sup>1</sup> *Eternal Life: A Study*, by F. von Hügel. T. & T. Clark.

matter and *things*." And on page 394 the same thought is even more forcibly expressed in the following words : " And finally in this scheme of life [that is the Christian scheme of life] the first cause, and the ultimate unity, of all things is found in God, as the supremely rich, self-revealing, self-giving eternal life. This ultimate Living Unity is trusted, and, in the long run, is mysteriously found, to permeate all, and to bring fruitfulness to any one good activity, from the other levels and kinds of goodness, even though apparently most distant or most contrary. And it is just because of this fundamental, ineradicable interconnection, and of the soul's conviction of it, that man's spirit can drive home this or that research or interest, and can remain sure of contributing (in proportion to his selfless attention to the immanent necessities and prophetic hints of its subject-matter) something of abiding value to the other departments and levels of man's energizings, and ultimately, to his further seeking and finding of Eternal Life."

Thus, to my pleasure, I found conclusions, which had been indicated to me by the history of art, independently corroborated.

It seems that what we have to deal with, what is latent in Christianity and coming out in the human mind in gradually definable thoughts, is the idea that matter is incomplete without spirit and spirit incomplete without matter, that the two are mysteriously yet indescribably blended. In this manner Christianity is represented as a culmination of all that went before it. The two rivers of thought, Eastern and Western, having flowed into each other, Christianity, prepared for and made possible by their union, seems to be so guaranteed by the whole course and development of human thought, that there is no escaping it save by renouncing or ignoring the continuity of experience of the human race. Viewed thus the Christian religion would include, as essential to its own realisation and perfect development, all the activities, faculties, and functions in human nature. All art and

science, all disinterested thought would belong to it as much as all spiritual exercise and inspiration. Between spiritual and temporal would be no fixed line. Each, we should say, has need of the other. Spirit without matter is a vacant abstraction, mocking the human senses that attempt to grasp it. Matter without spirit is a reiterated demonstration of the perplexing fact that not only are we all helpless dupes, but that we are duped by those very instincts and intuitions which we feel to be most pure and enlightened.

It is not, however, my purpose to raise the religious point as such. I am concerned with the nature of Christianity only in so far as it lights up for us the meaning of art.

The language of art is one of the two main vehicles in which life expresses its aspirations and ideas. Let life be dominated by the thought, indicated by Baron von Hügel, of the joint co-operation of material and spiritual influences, and immediately this conviction becomes the inspiration of art. This, it appears to me, the more complete realisation of this, is the message which art awaits to-day. She has finished what she had to say. She has been the instrument of purely spiritual thought and the instrument of purely intellectual thought. We cannot imagine her recurring to either of these motives, for both have been worked out. She has also vigorously expressed that further phase we spoke of, the mediæval phase, when a rough union or alliance was arranged between the two motives, and each contributed its share to the joint style. This is nearer to what we want, nearer to the requirements of modern life; yet neither does this meet those requirements. Mediæval art for modern purposes is evidently obsolete, and it is obsolete because of what we called its intellectual immaturity. To consider the crockets and cusps of a Gothic façade, and then in thought to turn to a specimen of Greek work, or to the work of one of the more delicate spirits of the Renaissance, such, shall we say, as Bramante, is to be



made conscious of the great deficiency which belongs to mediaeval art. Never can that art, rich though it is in sentiment and emotion, possess for us the interest which works of intellectual maturity possess. It is an art which is primitive, which has not learnt to think—just as the poetry of that age, too, just as “Chevy Chase,” for example, as compared with “Paradise Lost,” is a poetry which has not learnt to think. Greek art and the finer Renaissance art reason subtly and profoundly. Gothic art does not reason at all. This at once disposes of its claim to modern adaptation, but at the same time it suggests the direction in which modern art may be expected to develop.

The union of intellectual and spiritual we want and must have. But in the future it will be a genuine and fully developed intellectualism which we shall have to offer. Instead of a crude and rudimentary instinct, an intellectualism in its embryonic stages, a mere latent capacity for dealing energetically with mundane and material phenomena, we shall be able to contribute an intellectualism which for centuries has been ripened and enriched by culture and education. It will be the first time in history that a spiritual-intellectual alliance on equal terms will have been possible. When, in earlier centuries, we possessed a nobly developed spiritual sense, we possessed but a primitive and undeveloped intellectual sense to set beside it. And when, in later centuries, we possessed a fully matured intellectual sense, we had, in the process of maturing it, so suffered our spiritual sense to atrophy from disuse that this in turn was unable to play its part. Now for the first time we may anticipate a more equal balance. Now for the first time the intellectual and spiritual senses are both fully conscious and active. Now for the first time we know and are able to say that the ideal we have to realise is not of the spirit only, nor of the intellect only, but of both equally interfused and combined.

One word I would add. It may be suggested that such a fusion of motives is inconsistent with our previous



analysis ; for it has been argued that what was perfect in intellect was achieved by the elimination of all but strictly intellectual considerations, and what was perfect in spiritual art by the elimination of all but spiritual motives. If, then, their development and perfection consist in this eliminating process must not fusion necessarily lead to deterioration ? At the least must it not mean that the factors in which we deal will be maimed and crippled through being forced into unnatural association ? What we want is no compromise patched up between two adversaries, both of which have sacrificed themselves to secure it, but an alliance that shall imply fuller and more ample opportunities for both ; and how, under the circumstances, is this possible ?

What we have to remember, in answer to this, is that, since thought in human affairs leads the way and impresses its own characteristics on its means of utterance, our first business is with the thought, not with the art. The Christian ideal, the union of intellect and spirit, no doubt implies opposition. It has not the perfection of the entirely spiritual or entirely intellectual view. We were speaking in the last chapter of the dualism which runs through Nature and life and the mind of man. The Eastern philosophy and the pagan philosophy recognise that division, and build upon it, and would perpetuate it ; while the Christian philosophy aims at overcoming it and securing the united action of the two sides. The question really at issue is whether or not this claim constitutes what may be called a livable doctrine. Does it offer an adequate foundation for life ? Does the union of intellect and spirit seem to imply, in actual life, the maiming or weakening of either faculty or their more complete development ? I have endeavoured to point out already that no such weakening is implied, because the nature of the rival factors, though outwardly opposed, is really so allied inwardly that each may be said to be necessary to the other ; each offers to the other what was indispensable to its own growth and development.

But so it is with all the degrees of the dualism we were speaking of. Light is not conceivable as light unless we have dark to contrast it with. Hard is not conceivable but by contrast with soft. Opposition runs through the scale, but this is outward. More profoundly an inward sympathy unites the opposites. And therefore it is that we may believe it will ultimately be found that the ideal of a union of spiritual and intellectual will prove a livable doctrine, that it will offer an adequate foundation for life, and that it will imply, not the weakening of either faculty, but the completer development of both.

But if this is true of the thought so it will be of the art it speaks in. Thought, I said, impresses its own characteristics on its means of utterance. Of these art is one of the chief. Nothing lives in art which has not first lived in thought ; and when it appears in art it bears upon it precisely the same qualities and limitations in an aesthetic sense as the original thought bore in an ethical or philosophical sense. In proportion as the thought is true, the art will be beautiful. But the greatest art only lives and satisfies as long as the thought it stands for lives and satisfies. Intellect is a noble thing, and the Greeks expressed it nobly. But grant the time when an intellectual estimate of life will seem inadequate, when the very intellectualists themselves will feel that they have bought their clear-cut philosophy at too high a price and are sacrificing to maintain it too essential an ingredient in life—grant this sense of limitation and inadequacy in the sphere of thought, and the same defects will declare themselves in the sphere of art. It will still be perfect in the Greek sense, perfect as far as it goes, perfect outwardly. But it will share with its parent philosophy a more radical imperfection, the imperfection of including but a portion of life.

We all feel this ; we all feel in the long run, however deep our study and profound our appreciation of Greek architecture and sculpture, that there is something in

that very exactitude, that certitude and precision of articulation, which disappoints us. Beautiful, yes ; complete, yes ; but how much is there within us, how many and how profound desires and aspirations of the soul, which have grown and expanded since the Greek days, which could never in that finite perfection find any utterance at all ?

And so it is with the art in which mystical and spiritual absorption has been embodied. It is true that a Byzantine interior achieves its contemplative and completely emotional character by the obliteration of intellectual forms ; but that does not imply that the obliteration of form is essential to perfection in spiritual art ; it only implies that it is essential to the Asiatic idea of perfection. St. Basil, the founder of Eastern monachism, which existed only for trance and contemplation, would have hailed it with rapture. St. Benedict, the founder of Western monachism, which included thought and study and human interests and activities in the spiritual ideal, would have rejected it as imperfect ; as imperfect because so perfect ; as not spiritual enough because so exclusively spiritual. Here lies the issue. Greek art is not really perfectly intellectual, because it will not allow the intellectual to flow on and complete itself in the spiritual. And Byzantine art is not really perfectly spiritual, because it will not allow the spiritual to receive the reinforcement and support of the intellectual.

Art must always share the virtues and defects of the thought which bred it. Should it prove true that there is dawning upon the world to-day the consciousness of a religion which equally includes all spiritual and intellectual life ; and should this thought turn out to be not a contradiction in terms but rather the reconciliation of an ancient antagonism which has hitherto pervaded Nature and man, then out of this thought there will no doubt arise an art of like character, an art which shall show itself able to reconcile old antagonisms in the sphere of aesthetics, and in the act of reconciliation shall expand

and develop rather than diminish the principles with which it deals. In short, as the thought is so is the art.

If the thought I have endeavoured, with Baron von Hügel's help, to define is coherent, so also will the art it will speak through be coherent. If the thought be destined to unite views which have had their far-separated homes in East and West, then the art it will speak through will unite the two vehicles of form and colour through which West and East have hitherto separately spoken.

Nor are these necessarily remote and speculative suggestions, which have more place in a student's dreams than in the practical world. Indeed, the world itself at this very moment is engaged in arguing the case we have raised. Could we look behind the outward manifestations of the war now raging, and, instead of batteries and battalions, see the irreconcilable ideals which are urging on the conflict, what should we discover? What is the spiritual hostility behind the physical hostility?

Prussianism, at least, is not hard to define, for it shares the firm outlines of all strictly intellectual conceptions. Its diplomacy and policy, the motives on which it acts itself and expects other nations to act, the aims it has in view and on which it concentrates its will and purpose, its rigid mental limitations, its entire inability to understand the spiritual ideas which are moving mankind in the present hour—briefly, all we see of it and all it declares of itself proclaim the strict adaptation of its activity to the material sphere. It believes in a subject matter amenable to the laws of science and which can be manipulated by those laws. It believes in the State, the physical power of the State, and the submission of spiritual claims to the purposes of the State. The State is its materialistic ideal to which all else is subordinate, and the rigidly intellectual and scientific character of its education and training is in strict conformity with the nature of such an ideal.

But why should doctrines like these excite the in-



stinctive antipathy of the greater part of the civilised world? Prussianism is not an ignoble motive. It is, after all, but the motive which all States and Empires have acted on in the past, only more logically expressed and coherently carried out. "I have more sympathy," an English politician once said à propos of the Boer War, "with a strong nation struggling to be great than with a weak nation struggling to be free." The whole Prussian gospel is justified in those words, and they were spoken but thirteen years ago.

What then, we ask again, is the reason for the strong antipathy which the Prussian materialism now excites? Whence this sudden hatred of such a gospel of life? Let me remind the reader of a fact in regard to all antipathies. Nothing can be hated in and for itself alone. To seem hateful an idea must be viewed from the standpoint of another idea opposite to it in character. To say, therefore, that Prussianism is repugnant to us because of its intrinsic qualities is inadequate. It would on such reasoning be repugnant to the Prussians. It is really repugnant to us because its intrinsic qualities are directly opposed to those belonging to our own gospel of life. This is what is worth emphasising. That strong aversion, of which the signs are all around us, which is felt to-day for Prussian materialism would not be possible were it not that we ourselves had adopted, or were in process of adopting, an opposite ideal. And indeed that this is what is occurring should be apparent on independent evidence. For it may be accepted that all people, who are aware of what is going on in the region of thought, are conscious of the passing of the late narrowly scientific era, with its rigidly materialised standards corresponding with its rigidly intellectual habit of thought. Those views and standards, that narrow intellectualism with all its effects, are melting and softening to-day under new influences. The atmosphere is charged with new forces. The dew of a spiritual spring is in the air which lately was so hard and dry. Already the very language of scientific



definitions and rationalist arguments appears pompous and obsolete. Even in such practical matters as capital and labour, and the propositions of political economy, the old utilitarian, supply-and-demand theories are felt to be inadequate because of their denial of all but material motives. The truth is we are attentive in these days to suggestions which are not of the material order at all, to suggestions essentially emotional and spiritual in purport, and which, as I always think, are being borne to us from the East in invisible exchange for the more material contributions which the East is receiving from the West. Be that as it may, no sensitive temperament will question the spiritual susceptibility which is so marked a characteristic of the present generation, nor the sensation of impatience and, perhaps, contempt which the newly awakened sense has engendered for merely practical considerations and merely material aims.

But Germany has not shared in this awakening. With all her cleverness Germany's intelligence is not finely and delicately strung. Thorough as she is, industrious, almost dogged in her mental capacity, she lacks that pliability of mind, that sensitiveness and nimbleness of apprehension which recognise the advent of new modes of thought. Thus the very qualities which made her effective in certain fixed directions may easily in time of change retard her. When intellectualism was in the ascendant the assiduous tenacity of the German mind appealed to all Europe as the highest proof of intellectual efficiency. But directly that other kind of insight, more spiritual, swifter, and more immediate in its vision, dawned upon the human understanding, the limitations of Germanic thought were realised. By its very tenacity and stubbornness the German mind was undone. It was destitute of elasticity. It could not let go. To this hour it is still doggedly at work in its hopeless task of somehow, with the aid of intellect, hammering an adequate philosophy of life out of a material environment. Old estimates and old valuations die hard, and are repeated

long after the truth has gone out of them. The opinion formed long ago of the German genius has been handed down, like an heirloom, even to the present generation. Nevertheless, for several years now it has been apparent to many people that on subjects of general interest German thought in these days is consistently second-rate.

So in Germany the old material standards and purely practical considerations still find a home, nay, by German thoroughness and method are exalted into a regulated policy and philosophy of empire. It is with this we are at war. Yesterday we might have admired a materialism on the imperial scale, to-day it revolts us, recognising in it, as we do, a dead ideal out of which we have climbed to higher conceptions. Instinctively, profoundly, and, as time passes and the scorching light of war reveals the purposes of nations with ever accumulating certainty of knowledge, the thought of the ingrained German materialism and of the fact that that materialism is in direct opposition to all that is best and freshest and fullest of promise in the world's ideas, is penetrating the mind of Europe. We are fighting for a spiritual hope, and we are fighting Germany on that ground because Germany is the chief enemy of such hope and bar to its realisation.

These are considerations which, I believe, are becoming clear to us all. War is in some ways the greatest of all artists, for there is none other which achieves so successfully the purpose of all great art, the purpose of blotting out the superfluities and irrelevancies which entangle life in their growth and obscure its issues, until at last, in the glare of battle, the essential timbers which uphold our existence are revealed like the beams and rafters of a gutted house. Not by subtle reasoning and analysis are we to attain, perhaps, the knowledge of our faith, but by hammering out our intention on the anvil of war. By blows not by reasons, by the shedding of blood not ink, we shall articulate and purify our ideas. Our teachers and professors will be, not the old and learned, but youth ignorant and brave; nor will it be the first time that a

nation has worked out its salvation through acts of devotion and self-sacrifice, rather than through ingenious argument and intellectual discrimination. Instinct is more than intellect, and character itself is the highest intelligence. Thus what men do sword in hand, though done unthinkingly, may be the definition of a thought ; and our soldiers may prove the greatest of all our philosophers, since it will be they who will succeed at last in awakening us to the recognition of other than material standards. Indeed, there are already many, who, guided by that tuition, are looking to the battle-fields of the two frontiers with something of that " wild surmise " which attends the discovery of new oceans and continents. Many things, they feel, will be possible after this, which have hitherto proved impossible. Deeds not words are teaching us, and in the issue we shall perhaps be able to put into actual practice ideals which as yet we have only been able to talk about.

And still the reason of this confidence remains the same. Fighting materialism in its most formidable and imposing aspect as a rule and law of life, we are fighting the arch-enemy of spiritual light and progress, and, when we have done fighting, spiritual light and progress, we hope, will be nearer to us and more in our lives than they were. We fight not for England, France, Russia, Belgium, Serbia only ; nor against Germany, Austria, Turkey only ; these are but the names of inward hostile forces, and it is the inward antagonism, the battle of ideas, which sets the outward forces in motion. Our soldiers are sacrificing themselves for something greater even than a national ideal. They are sacrificing themselves for a spiritual ideal. And if we seek more closely into the nature of that spiritual ideal we shall find that it consists in nothing but the thought we have been endeavouring to explain, the thought of the insufficiency of mere materialism and mere intellectualism, and the desire to embrace an ideal of life, not unintellectual indeed, and not otherwise than sanely practical and

material, yet with its material aspect so altered, so shot and blended with spiritual significance, as to be the means of feeding, sustaining, and rendering intelligible to our earthly senses the spiritual order of ideas.

Such is the Western ideal, towards the realisation of which we are moving to-day. This it is which our armies are establishing and safeguarding to hand on to future generations as an inspiration of life first, and next of art. Beyond these dark days a hope extends which, indefinite in extent, is definite in character. We know not what spirit, disciplined and steadied by intellect, and intellect, illumined and inspired by spirit, may achieve, yet the general tendency and influence of such an alliance may be realised. The past reveals the separate and divided part which each faculty has played in human affairs, together with the deficiencies and limitations which have resulted from their isolation. But further, the past reveals the union of the two currents, and with it the inevitable development of thought which shall control the life of the future. What will be the note of that life? We define it by saying that it will embrace equally the things of the intellect and the things of the spirit. Its characteristic will be its universality, its acceptance, as equally indispensable to the whole, of every disinterested form of human thought and human knowledge. If the natural leads on into the spiritual, then all who have worked within the natural sphere, even though their own vision never extended beyond it, will be found to have been working for a spiritual purpose. Let that gulf be bridged, let the dependence each on the other of natural and spiritual be established, and there will at once be exorcised that spirit of dissension, at the root maybe of all dissensions, which springs from the pretensions of each faculty to deal with life after its own fashion. Thenceforth we shall have left behind all those narrower perfections, reached through the obliteration of a half of our means of enlightenment. Man will in the old sense of the word be made whole. All that

the East has divined and dreamed, all that the West has reasoned and thought out will be included in that final summary. This is the conception which is entering into life, and what enters into life must one day come out in art. More or less fitfully and dimly, yet with growing certitude, we are beginning to apprehend in Nature and in thought that reconciliation of intellectual and spiritual ideas out of which the reconciliation of form and colour will one day inevitably proceed.

THE END

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LOWE & BRYDONE (PRINTERS) LIMITED,  
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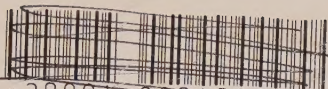






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